

Investigating how School Ecologies Mediate Sexuality Education: A Cybernetic Analysis Within the Free State Province, South Africa

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Abstract

Sexuality education has become the cornerstone to curbing risky adolescent behaviour as a means to decrease the spread of unsafe sexual practices and prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS. While the implementation thereof has shown effectiveness in practice, the desired change at the community level remains a challenge, especially in relation to multicultural norms and disparities with which educators are faced in different school contexts in Southern Africa. This paper raises the question: How do schools mediate sexuality education in Free State provincial schools to accommodate contextual challenges? In order to investigate how schools mediate uniform national- and curriculum-based benchmarks, 10 participants from five schools within the Free State province were purposefully sampled. Data from semi-structured interviews with participants were coded and themed, with this paper specifically reflecting on the theme of school and community boundaries influencing the implementation of sexuality education. Through a First and Second Order Cybernetic perspective, it was found that challenges of gender and race are among the barriers prohibiting positive feedback within school structures, as well as the need to allow communities and parents to become stakeholders in tailoring sexuality education to be relevant to expected national standards as well as contextual and relevant cultural and traditional values.

Keywords: Cybernetics; Sexuality Education; Social Justice; Systems; First Order Cybernetics

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INTRODUCTION

The shift from apartheid to democracy has seen South Africa adopt one of the most inclusive and progressive constitutions globally (Epstein & Morell, 2012). Constitutional reform has thus seen policies of uniting previously marginalised groups (such as those related to race and gender) and places a focal inclusive perspective on the way respect and dignity intertwine within South African society (The Bill of Rights, 1996). Globalisation has further led to the need for knowledge that can continuously adapt to the changing needs of society in South Africa (Alexander, 2016; Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015), as opposed to mere static knowledge which does not align diversity and indigenous knowledge with westernised customs and norms. However, it is within this paradigm toward social justice and accommodating cultural differences that specific impediments arise in practically implementing meaningful change, regardless of the inclusive boundaries of social justice and inclusivity set forth by South African constitutional benchmarks (Meier & Hartell, 2009).

One of the focus areas of implementing inclusivity of race, gender, and sexuality is the reflective nature of classroom practice in mirroring societal practices (Department of Basic Education, 2011; Msibi, 2012). The paradigm shift towards social justice in post-apartheid South Africa has seen a dynamic change in policies that accommodate inclusive racial- and sexuality-based pedagogies, with schools becoming key role players in establishing change aligned with socially just standards of respect for diversity and acceptance (Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015; Shefer et al., 2015).

However, inequalities remain rife within South African society, clearly illustrated through continuing racial, sexuality, and gender violence perpetuated within South African communities, regardless of constitutional policy advocating harmony and acceptance of diversity (Engelbrecht, 2006; Epstein & Morell, 2012). Educational spaces are faced with the challenge of not merely teaching knowledge but are also scrutinised in terms of what knowledge is applicable to specific cultures. Cultural plurality and globalisation have thus led to an increasing difficulty in delivering sexuality education that is socially just and relevant to all learners (Stromquist & Monkman, 2014).

In South Africa, life skills education is informed through the subject Life Orientation which aims to develop learners holistically towards demographic citizenship within the South African context (Jacobs, 2011; Mayeza & Vincent, 2019). Life Orientation (LO) was implemented as a core programme to establish learning spaces where social justice is advocated. One of its core pillars is based on life skills which resonate through learners' attitudes towards healthy sex and sexuality choices, the decrease of HIV and AIDS transmission and gender violence, and, ultimately, the transformation toward the constitutional goal of gender and sexuality justice (Shefer & Macleod, 2015). However, the literature emphasises that the practical ideals are not fully realised within Life Orientation, and that societal systems remain dysfunctional in areas of sexuality, thus questioning the effectiveness of Life Orientation as currently taught (Jacobs, 2011; Rooth, 2005). It is important to bear in mind that school systems reside in different areas (geographically), and, as such, are faced with different norms and values which influence school culture and ultimately what content is taught (DePalma & Francis, 2014). Different schools will ultimately realise practical teachings within a more individual-culture-specific manner, leading to the manner in which schools are situated within culture-specific contexts (Soudien, 2004; Meier & Hartell, 2009). It is evident that a systemic approach to sexuality is needed as a means to investigate the growing gap of what is being taught and why it is being taught, as well as to investigate the plurality of stakeholders within school systems (teachers, community, and school management, for example) (Beyers, 2011; Rooth, 2009; Van Wyk, 2004).

Keogh et al. (2018) identified challenges toward the implementation of sexuality education through their analysis subsuming Ghana, Kenya, Peru and Guatemala. Specifically of note are challenges in contextualising comprehensive sexuality education to local contexts as well as perceptions of unequal weight being provided towards Comprehensive sexuality education (considering CSE is integrated with other subjects in these countries, with educators often lacking the knowledge to implement CSE in their specific areas of teaching). Further challenges occur when multiple stakeholders do not agree on sensitive content to be included during curriculum development.

Zulu et al. (2019)'s study in rural Zambia, where Comprehensive sexuality education is integrated into sciences and social studies, found that teachers were often unsure of what to teach or how to approach certain Comprehensive sexuality education content. A South African study conducted by Prinsloo (2007) reflects that teachers can feel inadequate teaching Life Orientation and feel unequipped and limited in knowledge to optimally teach the subject. Francis' (2013) study on sexuality education in South Africa further shows that teachers' values and beliefs can mediate whether teachers adopt a comprehensive approach to sexuality education.

Literature predominantly focusses on isolated components of sexuality education (such as teachers or learners). A systems perspective becomes important. The primary aim of this article is to investigate sexuality education within a socio-cultural systemic perspective. Accordingly, this article examines the question: How do schools mediate sexuality education in Free State provincial schools to accommodate contextual challenges?

Theoretical Framework: First and Second Order Cybernetics

This study is framed through a systemic perspective based on First and Second Order Cybernetics. Primarily, First Order Cybernetics views systems in terms of the interactional patterns among components within a system and further establishes the researcher as an observer viewing these patterns and relations within boundaries, which can either be open or closed to input from other systems, and in turn adapt or reject input and output from other systemic levels (Becvar & Becvar, 2012). The aim of First Order Cybernetics is to describe a system (Glanville, 2002). At Second Order Cybernetic level, the researcher in conjunction with participants become a part of the system and in turn part of the 'why' in constructing reasoning as to why the system behaves as it does (Becvar & Becvar, 2012). This framework proves valuable in understanding how schools, as bounded systems, function with other systems, such as community- and national-level standards and expectations within the national boundaries of inclusivity and social justice set forth by the South African Constitution. Becvar and Becvar (2012) further stipulate that the observer (in a First Order Cybernetic perspective) focuses on the feedback processes, either positive or negative, that in turn either cause systemic change (positive feedback) or cause systems to remain stable throughout input (negative feedback). Becvar and Becvar (2012, pp. 80-83) state that cybernetics does not merely focus on structural change from within the structure itself, but that "we can think of the continually changing environment continually opening up further possible habitats for species to evolve *into* through internal pressures" and that a system such as that, e.g. a school, "... becomes distinct from its environment through its own dynamics". Thus, exploring how schools are ultimately rooted in communities within specific locations while still being a structural entity of their own interacting with other structures, proves valuable in identifying not only the 'what' but also the 'why' of how schools manifest functional or dysfunctional sexuality education.

METHODOLOGY

This study comprised of a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews based on how schools adapt and function regarding sexuality education within different contexts of the Free State province, at urban and rural levels (Blanche, Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2011).

Participants

Eight schools were approached to participate in this study. The intention was for an equal distribution between rural and urban contexts within the Free State. However, only five schools consented to participate. This intention to purposively approach schools for their demographic contextual forms part of non-probability sampling and is sufficient in providing insight into the dynamics of school contexts without the intent to generalise the data (Blanche et al., 2011).

Table 0.1: Demographics of participants

Participant	School no.	School type	Participant role	Gender	Race	Age group
1	1	Urban	School principal	Female	White	41-50
2	1	Urban	Deputy headmistress	Female	White	61-70
3	1	Urban	Deputy headmaster	Male	White	51-60
4	2	Rural	Life Orientation and English teacher	Male	African	31-40
5	3	Urban	Life Orientation teacher	Female	White	21-30
6	1	Urban	Life Orientation teacher	Female	White	31-44
7	3	Rural	Life Orientation teacher	Male	Coloured	41-50
8	4	Rural	School principal	Male	African	51-60
9	5	Rural	Life Orientation teacher and Head of Department	Female	African	41-50
10	1	Urban	Life Orientation teacher	Female	White	31-40

Data gathering and analysis

The primary method for accumulating data employed was semi-structured and focus group interviews. Interviews ranged between 30 to 45 minutes in length. Data analysis was informed through Tesch's (1992) method of coding. The recorded interviews were first transcribed verbatim and read separately by the researcher as an observer of the data (which also connects to a First Order Cybernetic perspective), while simultaneously connected and constructed throughout the process, possible themes emerging from the researcher's view (indicative of a Second Order Cybernetic perspective). Through the analysis of data, two subthemes became evident: a) school-level boundaries to teaching Comprehensive sexuality education, and b) community- and national-level boundaries to the teaching of Comprehensive sexuality education.

Ethical considerations

This study was primarily approved and registered at the institution through which the study was undertaken. Ethical clearance was provided to conduct research within schools on consenting participants (Ethical approval code **UFS-HSD2016/1385** was provided). All participants approached were briefed about the scope of the study and were informed as to the nature and content of the interviews. Participants were also briefed that, should the need arise, they could withdraw from the study or could refuse to answer any questions which cause discomfort. Participants were not misled in any manner. To ensure anonymity, any data that may lead to the identification of any participant or any of the schools or the location of the schools were removed and coded (and is indicated accordingly).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this report focus on answering the primary question posed: What are the challenges different schools are contextually faced with during sexuality education? Two important subthemes emerged through this question and will accordingly be discussed below. The subthemes pertain to two system boundaries: a) the system of the school and b) the system of the school within the community and larger provincial demographic setting.

School-level boundaries

From the onset of the primary interview with school management, it became clear that School 1 has a firm hierarchy within the context of sexuality education and how it is implemented at the systemic level. Observing the system itself primarily led to a clear illustration of how the system structures itself from the inside outward and indicates various levels of role players when considering sexuality education as a subject within the school. When asked about the specific role players that govern sexuality education and how it is implemented, Participant 1 (the school principal of School 1) responded:

Participant 1: The school governing body governs by means of approving policies. They govern by determining the curriculum and extracurricular activities offered by the school, so the school policy is the first way of governing content, where you must understand that the senior management team or first, the executive team including myself and the two deputies, then communicate to the senior management team. And then we also have grade heads in place for different grades, because of the different developmental stages of the [children], and then we have the subject teachers, so ... even though the governors determine and approve a policy, the practical implementation happens on educator level, and I think it's mainly the best guide, is the Life Orientation curriculum with needs that we identify through by means of grade meetings.

The school principal then further elaborated on the school culture, specifically the school ethos, in approaching sexuality education.

When asked whether participant 8, a school principal, would emphasise abstinence over comprehensive sexuality education, the participant reflected on an abstinence based approach. Specifically, safety through emphasising the repercussions of unsafe sexual behaviour, personal conduct and the dissemination of information are focal points of information for the learners in the specific school.

The following narratives reflect on teacher perspectives on teaching sexuality education in subject areas apart from Life Orientation. While school governance forms key role players in shaping a context for certain content to be taught or emphasized, the following participant reflects on the practicality of incorporating sexuality content in other subjects, and that at teacher level the context is often restricted and closed in boundaries, thus isolating sexuality education to the Life Orientation classroom:

Researcher: Do you feel that other teachers have a role in teaching about sex and sexuality in their subjects?

Participant 6: No, I don't think so. The kids do not have time to discuss these issues, or to have a class discussion about any of this. I know there are teachers who do talks and things about, for instance, boyfriends or relationships. But that's not part of their content. To me, it feels as if LO is the only place where you have time to do that. It's so filled for maths, and for science, I think biology is the only other physical science ... that's where they speak about reproduction and the anatomy. I know, for instance, in matric they discuss pregnancy and birth and things like that. Although I don't think the whole sex education part gets involved in that. That's more anatomy.

It is noteworthy that the context for various subjects and role players to become accountable within the teaching of sex and sexuality may fail at the practical level, specifically due to the attitudes of teachers in their perspective of whether or not they are role players within the content taught. The following narrative is reflected from Participant 4 when questioned about whether all teachers have a part in sexuality education:

Participant 4: I don't think, they have ... I don't think they think they have that responsibility, based on their attitude towards sexuality. For them, it is not their responsibility.

Researcher: So, if they teach math or biology, they stick to maths and biology.

Participant 4: Yes, and you will focus more on the content that you feel comfortable with. This sexuality is just rushed.

These narratives reflect the scope within which sexuality education is evaded at the inter-subject level. Valuable sources of interdisciplinary methods of teaching about sex and sexuality are

not fully realised. It is important to note that the managerial response to CSE shapes the context for sexuality education to take place at various sub-systemic levels. The onus however often resides with the subject Life Orientation to approach sexuality education content. This does not reflect that the content is always fully conveyed, as, at practical level, teachers may have the autonomy in how they approach the subject or, otherwise, silence it completely (Bhana, 2012; Mpondo et al., 2018).

Participant 5 reflects on the superficiality of the curriculum and the boundaries with which sexuality education manifest or, in turn, how teachers often place focus on the physical aspect thereof, with minimal focus on comprehensive sexuality education, reflecting on how teachers often interpret the curriculum and content in ways that conflict with their own values (Ahmed et al., 2009; Rooth, 2005; Swanepoel & Beyers, 2017) or are completely silenced:

Researcher: [What is] your experience up to now from the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS); what is your opinion of the way it explains and stipulates sex and sexuality that you have to teach?

Participant 5: Okay ... I think it is very well done, but very superficial. You cover it ... you do it a lot, instead of going deeper into the issues and what the learners are experiencing, for example, if they are gay ... the judgment from others, how they exert themselves in their communities. Instead of talking about that, it is always always about sex before marriage, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), and that I have a problem with. I don't think that CAPS and being teachers go deep into the subject matter.

It is at such a level where specific subject areas teaching about gender and sexuality can become crucial at implicit levels. Keogh (2018), who conducted a four country study on comprehensive sexuality education, indicate comprehensive sexuality education is often restricted by not being given equal weight when incorporated with other subjects. Spreen and Vally's (2012) further indicate the need for an interdisciplinary approach in that teaching should extend beyond the boundaries of mere specific school curriculums. DePalma and Francis (2014) and Unterhalter (2003) postulate it is once again within the school culture that such a challenging of gender normativity could be boundaried off as the context of the school alone does not always allow for certain topics to be breached.

The way in which sexuality education manifests at schooling level becomes clear from the participant narratives. While there is valuable information to be gained through interdisciplinary teaching of sexuality education through various subjects, the responsibility mainly falls on the Life Orientation part of the curriculum as a means to approach the topic, thus shunning responsibility as teachers may often feel too uncomfortable moving beyond the spheres of their own subject content.

Linkage of the school to the community and national ecologies

Through the analysis of data, it became evident that there is a strong link between the school itself and the wider community boundaries within which the school is situated. This becomes clear through the following narrative of Participant 9, who had formerly taught Life Orientation in the Eastern Cape and now teaches in the Free State:

Participant 9: I feel that even though we have different provinces and each different province has its own dynamic, so I would feel that the national department would allow the provincial department to interact and involve the community leaders in the different provinces based on how they feel. Eastern Cape it is okay, we are allowed, we know we have the headman, the chief, if you have permission from that you can go ahead with everything. But here in the Free State it is a different story.

Connecting with the above narrative, Participant 7 reflects on the difficulty of the system to adapt to the norms of the community. This participant echoes the work of Masehela and Pillay (2014)

in that schools are situated within specific communities and must often adapt to the norms and values set forth by the communities.

Participant 6 reflects on the difficulties of teaching about gender and sexuality within the classroom due to wider national boundaries which influence her classroom practice. Linking to the historic underpinning of apartheid and South Africa, the participant elaborates that, even within an urban school with a more open means to discuss the topic, there are still limitations and closed boundaries as to what can be discussed:

Participant 6: Due to the whole racism aspect of South Africa, it is very difficult to discuss cultural views because you have to be very careful not to open up a racist or racial discussion. It is difficult when you have so many culture groups in your class, because you could say something offensive. That's difficult because you, you need to be sensitive and although these are kids, they don't always hear what you are saying. So they will hear something and they will take it and run with it without actually understanding what it was meant to be.

Participant 6 teaches within an open-boundaried urban area and is faced with the implications of racism and struggles to accommodate different cultural backgrounds within the classroom.

Participant 9, an African teacher within a rural setting, reflects on her role as a female teacher and how male learners approach her during certain sexuality education content.

Participant 9: The problem is where I am working now, because of the cultural differences we have boys who are from initiation schools, so they feel if you talk to them about sexuality as a woman, so they tend to be squirmish about it, others they just don't want to listen, but others they laugh, instead of taking you seriously.

This narrative reflects the work of Epstein and Morrell (2012) suggesting that male power still dominates South African culture, with women taking on subordinate positions within practice.

The previous two participants reflect that teachers approach topics with awareness of cultural nuances which underly their approach. The following two narrative extracts reflect that sexuality education is not only influenced by closed school-culture boundaries and teacher discomfort within the classroom but also by the norms of the community:

Participant 4: I tried but you realise that at school level sometimes learners, they ... for example, in township schools in [school name removed] you realise that at secondary school, especially at grade 12, teachers they could tell learners that Life Orientation is not useful.

Participant 4 later during the interview noted the difficulty of teaching a community where initiation takes place as normative practice within the rural community where the participant is located.

Participant 5 (as opposed to participant 9) experiences greater discomfort when crossing closed boundaries during topics of sexuality. Of note is that while Participant 9 an African female in a rural school feels addressing these topics more comfortably, Participant 5 (a younger, white female teacher within an urban community) experiences discomfort with it, specifically drawing on the broader system of parents as closing the boundaries to her pedagogy.

Participant 5: I cannot show them any videos because the principal and parents will be against it, but I do make use of textbooks. But textbooks can only take you so far, when you are in a classroom setting you need to take the individual learners into consideration when talking to them about something so sensitive.

Participant 9's view aligns with the research of Goldman (2008), reflecting that it is the parents as well who contribute to shaping the responsibility of sexuality education, and ultimately what topics should be taught:

Researcher: How receptive are the parents to what you are teaching, and have there been any issues from parents dictating what you should teach?

Participant 9: No, parents are okay with it. And many parents are relieved because they cannot talk about the birds and the bees to their kids because most are kids living with grandparents. It is difficult for the grandparents to introduce the subject. If the child is starting with menstrual period, what do they say to the child? If it's a boy and the boy is horny, how do they address these types of things?

The participant reflects on her experiences as a female teaching Life Orientation, and in approaching the topic at a more personal level, reflects on how certain sensitive information is to be brought across at home where children are living with grandparents. The perspectives of parents provide positive feedback for the educator to incorporate sexuality topics during her teachings.

Through the above narratives one can deduce the importance of involving various stakeholders during the process of sexuality education. It is thus noteworthy that accountability cannot be the sole responsibility of the Life Orientation teacher. The community and broader levels of the school itself must become involved if positive feedback is sought. This is in line with the First Order Cybernetic framework in identifying various components that form interactional patterns which manifest sexuality education, aligning with the postulation that various factors are contextually at play influencing the manner in which positive or negative feedback interacts with the school system's boundaries.

Meier and Hartell (2009) argue that South Africa should not move towards a uniform culture and must thus accommodate individual cultures within a democratic and uniform framework of respect and acceptance of diversity, a notion reflected by Participant 6. The participant draws on respect for diversity of views and an open platform for questions as core values to accommodate positive feedback in establishing change, whereas a lack thereof would root classroom teachings in a close-boundaried system, which is in contrast with wider national policies and reform.

Participant 6: They do have their views as to what is a feminist. But I think we are very used to stereotypes. So we will have various views on that and amongst that we will have the ones who do not understand. Or what does it mean to be a feminist? Or what does it mean to stand for what's right in the true sense of the word.

Participant 6 further stated:

Participant 6: For me, I will always go back to the do we respect each other's right. That is basically where I always start off at, or where, I guess I use that as the protection part of Life Orientation. It's difficult, because once a discussion like that starts to end it, once the girls are on a roll it is quite difficult.

The participant narratives reflect that South Africa is faced with various challenges of mediating sexuality education to be implemented to instil positive feedback and ultimately systemic change. In analysing the narratives, the importance of viewing school structures within a demographic context became increasingly clear, and to thus question whether a uniform framework of knowledge is applicable across the national system at provincial levels. This is aligned with Epstein and Morrell's (2012) findings that no knowledge can be seen as absolute, as absolute knowledge stands in contrast to democratic values. As such, it must be acknowledged that schools are situated within specific communities which oftentimes mediate the type of values and knowledge that must be taught (Chabilall, 2012). However, as noted by Davids (2014), sexuality issues such as HIV and AIDS are

firmly rooted in community-level boundaries, where masculinity and femininity inequalities remain rife (Kendall, 2011; Moletsane, 2011). It is thus important to bridge the gap of mere knowledge as to what content should be taught at contextual level by establishing a wider network of stakeholders who are accountable during the teaching of sex and sexuality (Mathews, Boon, Flisher & Schaalma, 2006). Participant 9, for example, draws a clear link between opening the boundary to sexuality education and involving the community, specifically the community leader, to shape comprehensive sexuality education that is applicable at wider levels, while still upholding contextual values and norms:

Participant 9: We had to talk to the community leader who is male and then you invite them and talk to them and explain this is in the curriculum, these are the things we need to talk about, they are not gender based, they are more like trying to help the kids, it's a life-skills thing.

The need for schools to be accountable for comprehensive sexuality education becomes increasingly clear as learners may not always be prepared fully at home, as is reflected through Participant 9's narrative on learners growing up with grandparents, or as Participant 8 reflects that "Some of them are child-headed children and no parents". Participant 8's narrative bellow further draws on a multi-stakeholder approach in which programmes are implemented that reflect the content and the need to be taught (contextually tailored in this instance pertaining to abstinence as a means to curb the high prevalence of teenage pregnancies in the school), and how parents received it:

Participant 8: We have been having a project here at school that deals with sexuality education in trying to prevent early experiences.

The main focus was on grade 8, and the objective thereof was to try and demonstrate to the learners the difficulty of having a child. What they did was to provide them with cell phones and dolls. And this approach, I mean, it was for communication. Even at night, when they were at home, they called these learners to say, "Feed the child". It was like a role play. When a child cries, what to do, such things. Feed the child; take the child to the doctor, the financial implications involved regarding raising the child.

The participant then reflects:

Participant 8: It was positive because we started with the parents. We have to involve the parents. Actually, we invited all the parents who were going to be involved.

There is a need for tailored programmes to be introduced into schools, aimed at introducing topics that are contextually relevant, while upholding values of respect and collaboration with both community- and national-level expectations (Weeks, 2012). However, in establishing such support for positive feedback to occur and a means to change the way schools manifest and mediate comprehensive sexuality education, school structures will need to produce open boundaries to both national- and community-level stakeholders. It is within such an approach that contextual change can occur (Bhana & Pattman, 2009), instead of rooting the structure of schools in teachings that are not nationally based on respect and diversity and thus rooted in unsafe traditional values and norms. There is a further need for educators to be trained and equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to mediate challenges of gender and sexuality that arise within school contexts (Wood, Rogow & Stines, 2015), especially regarding the role of all teachers who are accountable beyond the scope of Life Orientation alone.

In synthesis of the above, the results indicate that schools as stand-alone entities embody a specific culture and within the school system has various influences which mediate how sexuality education is taught.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paradigm shift to social justice and post-apartheid South Africa has seen one of the most inclusive constitutional policies globally being implemented. Inclusivity of gender and sexuality diversity has been of forefront focus in establishing inclusivity and acceptance for all cultures. However, as key role player in restoring societal harmony, schools have yet to practically implement sexuality education that is applicable across South Africa, while still adhering to community and societal rules and norms. Incidences of sexual abuse, heteronormativity, sexism and patriarchal attitudes remain rife not only within schools but also within South African society. Research has largely focussed on individual incidences of socially unjust practices in schools; however, a systemic multi-stakeholder approach is needed as a means to understand and better tailor interventional strategies at contextual level. Furthermore, a more contextual approach to the teaching of comprehensive sexuality is needed, as also underscored through previous work in the area. This becomes especially relevant when examining schools as individual systems, each encountering and responding to challenges to sexuality education in relation to the specific contextual climates in which they are situated.

It was found that teacher communication within the broader system of the school structure and community is needed for open boundaries that provide them with skills and knowledge that are aligned with national standards as well as respecting indigenous knowledge and practices. To negate a vacuumed educational approach, linking the school to the wider ecology within which the school resides become important. Such a linkage allows for positive feedback to be incorporated into the system, while allowing for overall systemic structure to be retained at contextual level. Establishing contact with stakeholders (such as parents and the wider community) outside of the school system itself becomes increasingly important, as well as involving other systems (such as community elders and leaders within certain rural settings) to deliver input as a means to establish feedback within the school structure that will lead to positive feedback and subsequent change aligned with the values and benchmarks at national level.

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No potential conflict of interest was declared by the authors

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