

Educational Research for Social Change (ERSC)

Volume 11 No. 1 April 2022


pp. 27-41

[ersc.nmmu.ac.za](http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za)

ISSN: 2221-4070

## Teaching for Comfort or Diversity in Comprehensive Sexuality Education Classrooms? Third-Year Student Teachers' Perspectives<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Discussion of sexual rights in the context of disability is an often neglected and underdeveloped terrain within the human rights discourse, worldwide. More so, it becomes taboo to discuss the sexual health and reproductive rights of adolescents living with disabilities. This group of adolescents are often constructed as being sexually innocent, asexual, or lacking sexual agency thus denying their sexual autonomy. In other contexts, adolescents living with disabilities are constructed as hypersexual, thus putting them at risk of sexual exploitation and harm. While the human rights terrain has begun to acknowledge adolescents living with disabilities as ordinary citizens with rights equal to those of other citizens, they have not fully been recognised as sexual beings in their own right as human beings, especially in the Global South. Thus, in this article I aim at rethinking an inclusive sexuality education in South African schools that caters for the special needs of adolescents living with visual impairment. I employ theatre-in-education processes to explore student teachers' understandings and perceptions of teaching sexuality education to learners with visual impairment. Thirty-five student teachers participated in the study and engaged in theatre-in-education presentations and discussions. Data for this paper consist of students' discussions of their experiences of the theatre-in-education processes, which were thematically analysed. The findings indicate that the student teachers resorted to their comfort zones when designing their lesson portrayals—in line with their socialisation. However, their understandings and perceptions of using assistive devices to teach sexuality education were challenged and deconstructed through their engagement in theatre-in-education processes, thus highlighting the importance of engaged scholarship in deconstructing harmful norms towards transformative pedagogies.

**Keywords:** adolescent disability, drama pedagogy, human rights, sexual health and reproductive rights, sexuality education, theatre-in-education

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<sup>1</sup> Ethical clearance number: H18-EDU-ERE-005

**Please reference as: Khau, M. (2022).** Teaching for Comfort or Diversity in Comprehensive Sexuality Education Classrooms? Third-Year Student Teachers' Perspectives. *Educational Research for Social Change*, 11 (1), 27-41. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2022/v11i1a3>

## Introduction

The dawn of democratic rule in South Africa in 1994 heralded changes in its constitution, legislation, and sociopolitical sphere to redress the injustices of the past. At the forefront of these changes was the advancement of basic human rights for all. This led to the recognition of youth living with disabilities as important role-players in the reconstruction of a new and inclusive South Africa (Chappell, 2016). In line with this, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities acknowledged accessibility of resources as a fundamental aspect in realising disability rights to enable full and equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life (United Nations, 2006). Within the modern ableist world, accessibility has been used by disability activists as a yardstick in exploring experiences of people living with disabilities (Human Rights Watch, 2015), especially access to inclusive education and ending discrimination of adolescents with disabilities (Howell et al., 2006). While there has been much improvement on access to HIV and AIDS services (Hanass-Hancock, 2009) and legal services for adolescents with disabilities (Dickman et al., 2006), less attention has been given to their education on relationships and sexuality, despite the provision of accessible and comprehensive sexuality education being essential to a rights-based framework. Notwithstanding increasing recognition of equal rights and opportunities for adolescents living with disabilities, they have not yet gained the recognition they deserve as autonomous sexual beings.

There have been several inconclusive debates regarding the definition of adolescence worldwide. Sawyer et al. (2018) have argued that adolescence needs to be defined more inclusively as encompassing biological growth and social role transitioning. This would allow the framing of developmentally suitable laws, policies, and systems for young people. They point out that a definition of adolescence as the lifetime spanning the ages 10–24 years is more appropriate for this phase of life; these authors base this definition on the changes in the transitioning period between childhood and adulthood over the last century (Sawyer et al., 2018). Adolescence is characterised as a period of self-identification and experimentation.

Adolescents are at a stage in which they are figuring out who they are becoming and what capabilities they possess (UNESCO, 2018). According to Pettifor et al. (2009), this stage of life is accompanied by high levels of sexual risk-taking with subsequent sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, and HIV infections. In agreement, UNICEF (2015) reported that more than 70 per cent of sub-Saharan African adolescents aged between 12 and 19 years lack comprehensive knowledge of their sexual and reproductive rights. In the context of South Africa, the Children's Act (2005), while not addressing sexuality specifically, referred to adolescents over the age of 12 years as having the ability to access condoms and different contraceptives and the right to consent to HIV testing without parental or caregiver consent. To address the risky sexual behaviours of adolescents, technical guidelines were produced by UNESCO (2009) to guide in the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in schools. However, the provision of CSE in South Africa does not accommodate learners and adolescents with disabilities or visual impairment (Hanass-Hancock, 2009; Rohleder et al., 2009).

As a curriculum, CSE is aimed at engendering attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding safer sexual practices, desire and pleasure, gender power relations, and sexual diversity (UNESCO, 2018). For adolescents with visual impairment, this curriculum policy does not translate into practice because they cannot access real-world understandings of the anatomy and physiology of human genitalia through audio means only (Krupa & Esmail, 2010). While children may generally understand the

differences between boys and girls, those with visual impairment have difficulty identifying such features. This becomes more problematic during adolescence when their bodies mature physically and become ready for sexual debut and the challenging aspects of psychosexual development such as desire and sexual pleasure. Thus, the lack of preparation of adolescents with visual impairment transitioning into these psychosexual developmental stages could lead to increased risk for early sexual debut, unwanted pregnancy, and STIs—as well as vulnerability to sexual abuse (Hanass-Hancock, 2009).

The provision of quality and meaningful CSE to adolescents with visual impairment can be achieved with the use of assistive sexuality devices and technologies (Krupa & Esmail, 2010). According to Ramaahlo (2020, p. 60), assistive device refers to an “assistive, adaptive and rehabilitative device” that can be used as an aid in teaching and learning of learners living with disabilities in any subject including CSE. In this regard, Kapperman and Kelly (2013) argued that various assistive devices and technologies exist for any type of disability, functional limitation, or educational purpose. Such devices can be introduced to children at age-appropriate levels of psychosexual development and consideration of their disability (Kapperman & Kelly, 2013; Kapperman et al., 1993; Krupa & Esmail, 2010). Despite the availability and recommendation of using assistive sexual devices for demonstration and teaching during CSE, there has not been much research conducted to investigate their use in classrooms and teachers’ experiences and perceptions regarding the use of such devices. Based on this argument, I explored student teachers’ perceptions and understandings of teaching CSE to adolescent learners with visual impairment in order to understand when and how they use assistive devices.

## **Comprehensive Sexuality Education in the Classroom**

Despite research evidence of the effectiveness of CSE in preventing early sexual debut (White & Warner, 2015), challenges exist regarding its implementation in schools. Much research has been conducted globally regarding teachers’ experiences of teaching CSE and the challenges they face in teaching such a taboo subject (Baxen, 2010; Epstein et al., 2003; Khau, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2004; Paechter, 2004). UNESCO (2009) argued that the purpose of CSE is to equip learners with relationship skills and assist in their holistic development, and Janssen (2009) pointed out that effective CSE should take a positive stance in addressing sexual diversity and be critical of norms. On the other hand, Kirby (2008) warned that the rights-based framework used in CSE has proven controversial in communities regarding the teaching and content of the subject. CSE is a subject aimed at teaching learners factual sexuality information that allows them to make informed relationship decisions. However, CSE is not generally perceived in this positive light by all stakeholders, especially government and religious leaders who believe that it encourages promiscuity and a laissez-faire attitude to sexuality (Lesko, 2010; Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2008).

Scholars studying the situation of CSE in South Africa have argued that the construction of children as innocent and needing protection from sexuality information and education denies them the right to lifesaving information that could help them act towards protecting themselves against sexual violence, STIs and HIV, and unwanted pregnancies (Mitchell et al., 2004). As argued by Parikh (2005), moralistic community responses to CSE in schools create challenges for its effective implementation. Parents and teachers in such communities believe that teaching CSE corrupts children and leads them towards sexual experimentation and promiscuity (Khau, 2012). Baxen (2010) also found out that teacher identities impact teachers’ comfort and confidence levels in teaching CSE in schools.

Exacerbating the challenges to effective implementation of CSE in schools are the religious and cultural beliefs in communities that construct sexuality as a taboo subject (Bhana et al., 2019), thus making CSE for adolescents with disabilities extra sensitive for teachers. Mainstream CSE teachers employ a pedagogy of discomfort, in which they are culturally and religiously conflicted and feel embarrassed to

teach CSE (Bhana et al., 2019; Francis & DePalma, 2015; Mayeza & Vincent, 2019). According to Epstein et al. (2003), CSE is the only subject that requires parental consent in schools due to its sensitive nature and the belief that it corrupts children's innocence. Believing in childhood sexual innocence makes it difficult for teachers to effectively implement CSE in schools and makes it doubly challenging when teaching learners with disabilities who are constructed as asexual (see Paechter, 2004).

## **Research Methodology**

This qualitative research study employed participatory visual and arts-based methodologies. Finley (2005, p. 686) asserted that arts-based research "provides a formula for a radical, ethical and revolutionary qualitative inquiry." For this study, drama was used to enable student teachers to communicate and express themselves in the classroom (Finley, 2005). Fels (2004) noted that in performative inquiry, drama is used to understand critical societal issues. This paper draws from a larger study that received ethical clearance from the university's Human Research Ethics Committee to ensure that all research activities would follow ethical protocols. The third-year life orientation student teachers were informed of the study and the request for their participation and freedom to opt out. All student teachers agreed to take part in the study, and they all signed informed consent forms. The student teachers were also informed that the activities for the research would not form part of assessment activities for the module. The student teachers were then allocated numbers to be used in lieu of their names in presentation of the data and findings.

The study took place in the context of a life orientation lecture for third-year student teachers. All 35 registered students for the course participated in the study. The class was divided into five groups that created and performed theatrical presentations of their experiences, understandings, and perceptions of teaching CSE to learners with visual impairments. All the student teachers agreed to be audio-recorded when discussing their reflections on the performances of teaching CSE. The student teachers were provided with a box of material to use as props for their performances and were free to select whatever they deemed useful for their production.

During a lecture discussion on CSE for high school learners, the student teachers talked about their experiences of being taught CSE in schools and how they thought they would teach in their own classrooms. The plan for them to stage performances of how they would teach learners with visual impairment came about due to discussions on ensuring that their teaching was inclusive of the diversity of learners in schools. The student teachers' performances were based on the prompt: "How can you best teach CSE to adolescent learners with visual impairments in your classrooms?" They were provided with storyboards to plan their performances and to decide on who would act in which part. The storyboards were important tools in getting the student teachers to think through their content and scenes. Once all groups had completed their planning sessions and rehearsed their performances, they were given time to perform in class.

The audience groups were asked to note issues of inclusivity and accommodation of learners with visual impairment during the performances, and to note what aspects needed to be improved. The discussions between performing groups and audience groups were audio-recorded. The student teachers' insights and experiences were analysed thematically.

## **Drama Pedagogy**

Drama pedagogy is aimed at developing critical consciousness and societal change. It challenges societal injustices and contributes towards transformed societies (Davies, 2014). Dalrymple (1997, p. 84) argued that drama pedagogy is holistic, experiential, and participatory, thus providing "a broad framework in which to explore ideas from a range of different perspectives." Drama pedagogy's

purpose is positive social change (Neelands, 2007), and Giambrone (2016, p. 18) pointed out that it uses “identity recognition and personal transformation as a means to social change.” These arguments are in line with Boal’s (1979) theory that dramatic performance can assist people in changing their reality and transforming marginalised lives.

Theatre-in-education as a branch of drama pedagogy uses drama and theatrical performances as pedagogical tools for interactive learning (Lu, 2002). The process of theatre-in-education begins with a social issue of concern, which gets used as an overarching theme for theatrical creations and performance (Athiemoalam, 2021; Tarlington & Michaels, 1995). Students collaborate to select an aspect of the theme to develop a theatrical performance that depicts their understandings and perceptions of the theme for an audience. Once the performance is complete, the actors and audience reflect on the scripted issues to “actively engage the audience in the learning process” (Jackson, 2001, p. 1).

In this research, third-year student teacher groups created their own theatrical productions based on their perceptions and understandings of teaching CSE to adolescent learners with visual impairments, which they performed for other groups and the lecturer within the context of the life orientation lecture room.

## **Theoretical Framework**

I employed Bourdieu’s theory of practice to make meaning of student teachers’ engagement with the theatre-in-education performances. According to Kraus (1991, p. vii), Bourdieu argued that one cannot understand “social activity outside the action of the subjects” because subjects act as agents in constructing and transforming their society. Thus, Bourdieu’s theory of practice aims at people’s understandings and explanations of the interactions within contexts and the societal actions practiced within such contextual settings (Webb et al., 2002).

Bourdieu (1990a, p. 65) argued that people do not only act in “obedience to rules,” but also follow their own interests in each practice. His argument was that “whether actors conform to norms or follow prescribed rituals is dependent on their interests” (as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 99). This is because, according to Bourdieu (1990b), people are constituted within and by their practices. This implies that people strategically improvise in their responses to opportunities or constraints depending on their dispositions. The three main concepts of Bourdieu’s theory, field, capital, and habitus, are discussed below.

### **Field, Capital, and Habitus**

According to Cheal (2005, p. 155), Bourdieu’s field can be described as “a structure of relationships between positions.” Bourdieu’s concept of field differentiates legitimate players from those without the capital required for participation. Bourdieu argued that people’s engagement in the game of life depends on the amount of capital they possess. Those who have lots of capital become powerful agents in determining what constitutes capital in specific fields. According to Bourdieu (1984), capital structures society by affording those who possess it the power to play in a field and to validate worthy practices in such a field. Cheal (2005, p. 156) additionally argued that capital is “a possession that gives individuals that ability to do certain things, such as exercising domination over others.” Thus, having capital means one has the power to control other people’s futures as well as one’s own (Postone et al., 1993).

Economic capital can be defined as having access to financial resources that can translate into money. Economic capital is the unit for class differentiation in society, thus those who possess it are positioned

higher in the societal hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1984). According to Cheal (2005) and Swartz (1997), the more resources one possesses means one's social capital is more viable. Social capital is acquired through networking with those who have social, cultural, and economic capital. More networks with those who possess economic or cultural capital increase one's own social capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Therefore, social capital is influenced by the types of social networks and group memberships one has. To increase one's social capital requires active participation and exchange of benefits with other members of the network.

Cheal (2005, p. 159) defined symbolic capital as the "capacity to construct beliefs about the world and make them seem real." Thus, it can be argued that symbolic capital embodies the other three capitals. It can manifest as fame, prestige, or reputation and, at times, it can be portrayed through respect and trust associated with any of the three symbols. One's social standing is determined by the amount of capital they accumulate over their lifetime. Thus, Bourdieu (1991) argued that people compete in various fields to gain different types of capital. This makes competition an inherent part of participating in each field. Bourdieu also argued that symbolic capital regulates the distribution and redistribution of capital in each field because those who possess different forms of capital are given the power to determine the rules of the game. Thus, according to Bourdieu (1991, p. 192), symbolic power exists "because the person who submits to it believes that it exists." Bourdieu (1990b) argued that symbolic power reveals itself through symbolic violence. He argued that misrecognition is a principal component of symbolic violence in that symbolic power is enforced in unjustifiable ways through an agent's complicity. The agents, according to Bourdieu (1990b), actively engage in their own subordination and violation because they construct such actions as normal. Thus, the inequitable distribution of resources, spaces, and positions in society is taken as normal by the marginalised, who have normalised their subordination.

Habitus, according to Swartz (1997), is a result of one's experiences and socialisation. One's habitus shapes one's actions so that the limitations and opportunities they got socialised into get maintained. Therefore, Bourdieu (1991) argued that people's habitus allows them to accept economic and social inequality as normal due to internalising their socialisation. Nietzsche (1966) agreed with Bourdieu that in every field, people always act out of their self-interest. He posited that each individual action is driven by people's vested interests in the game because they have a will to power. Based on Bourdieu and Nietzsche's arguments, it can be deduced that self-interest governs and regulates each individual action or lack of, the rules of the game, and the specific field in which the activity is performed, and each person's place within the field's hierarchy.

## Findings

The student teachers' reflective discussions of their engagement with the theatre-in-education performances for teaching CSE to visually impaired learners produced two major themes: sticking with what we know, and reimagining accommodative pedagogies. These themes reflect student teachers' experiences and understandings of CSE in high school classrooms and their engagement in reimagining an inclusive CSE classroom for adolescent learners with visual impairments. The two themes are discussed below, using verbatim excerpts from the student teachers.

### Sticking With What We Know

During the performances of teaching CSE to adolescent learners with visual impairment, the student teacher groups chose and enacted specific themes for their play. The five groups presented theatre-in-education performances that aligned with what they knew in terms of how they had been taught CSE as adolescent learners and their personal comfort in dealing with CSE. These groups presented lessons on contraception, HIV and AIDS prevention, safe use of condoms, sexual consent, and sexual



desire and pleasure. The first group of seven women presented a lesson where a teacher taught about the use of contraceptive pills. The presentation made use of samples of different contraceptive pills and charts depicting the menstrual cycle and the learners discussed the pills and charts. When asked by the audience about their choice of props, G1S1 (Group 1, Student 1) said,

*This is how we were taught . . . we were given the samples to see and count the number of pills per pack . . . it is safer this way.*

Agreeing with the aspect of safety, G1S2 who acted as the teacher said,

*I felt comfortable teaching this way because there was nothing vulgar about my lesson and the props . . . it was pills and charts.*

Bringing a different angle of safety was G1S3 who pointed out that being a Muslim woman, there were certain things she could not comfortably engage students in regarding CSE. She highlighted the restrictions of her faith on women and what was permissible for women to do,

*I am Muslim . . . it is against my religion for women to talk about certain aspects of sexuality.*

Another member of the group, G1S4, said that she could not talk to unmarried learners about contraception because they are expected to abstain until marriage. Her argument was that contraception should be used only within marriage to space families. This argument was supported by G1S5 and G1S6. The group focussed on their comfort levels in selecting a topic to teach and the props to use—without much emphasis on the lesson being inclusive of adolescent learners with visual impairment.

The second group presented a lesson on the prevention of HIV and AIDS. This group had a mix of male and female student teachers. Their presentation focussed on the ABCs of preventing HIV infections using sample male and female condoms, information pamphlets, and audio clips of people living with HIV. The teacher in this presentation gave the learners the different types of condoms to touch and feel the packages. The third group was also mixed and presented a play on the safe use of condoms. The teacher used samples of male condoms and told the students how to open the condom pack and unroll it. The learners opened their condoms and unrolled them during the presentation. These two groups were asked by the audience why they chose the strategies they employed in their performances. G2S1 said,

*I think the audio clips were good to get students to understand that HIV is real and can affect anyone . . . also, those with visual impairment can hear the voices in the clip.*

G2S2 agreed with the use of audio, saying that it was inclusive of those with visual impairment, but also safe for the teacher because someone else was doing the talking. It seemed to be the general consensus among Group 2 members that getting someone else to teach about sensitive issues was safer for teachers who feel uncomfortable with certain CSE topics. When Group 3 members were asked why they did not include assistive devices to unroll the condoms onto, there was agreement among them that it would have been shameful to do so in class. Some of the male student teachers in Group 3 argued that their culture was very strict on how men who have been to the traditional initiation school should behave. Some said,

*I am a man and I am not comfortable talking to learners about male organs . . . they will not respect us if we do that. (G3S3)*

*They should just know how to safely open the packet and unroll it . . . I do not think I can use a penis-like device for them to unroll it on . . . sjuuu. (G3S5)*

The general unease among the male student teachers regarding the idea of using a penis model to enable learners to unroll a condom properly portrayed their discomfort in talking about male sexuality to younger people, especially those who had not been to the traditional initiation school. Because of going through this cultural rite of passage into adulthood, the male student teachers felt they had limits to what they could comfortably say in their classrooms as part of respecting their newly acquired position of *indoda* [real man].

On the other hand, Group 4 presented a play in which two learners walk home together and the male tells the female that he loves her. Their next scene presented the male learner asking the female to show him that she truly loved him. This led to a scene in which the female told the male that even though she loved him, she was not ready for sex. The male learner told the female that it was over between them and left. Group 4 members argued that they had chosen this theme because adolescent learners are experimenting with sex and sexual consent. They argued that they wanted to highlight that when a girl agrees to be in a relationship with a boy, it does not count as consenting to having sex. When asked about their storyline, G4S2 said,

*We agreed in the group that we have seen this happening to us when growing up . . . we know it is still happening in schools. So, it would be good to use this drama to show boys and girls that agreeing to a relationship is not agreeing to have sex.*

Continuing the discussion, G4S3 said,

*We assumed that our learners would be having partial visual impairment, so they would see the dramatisation and hear the conversation between the boy and girl.*

The other Group 4 members agreed that they had chosen a theme they would be comfortable with portraying in a classroom setting. However, in their reflections, some of the group members said that they had never seen visually impaired learners pursuing boy-girl relationships. This argument was also taken up by the audience members who argued that they did not think visually impaired learners thought about their sexuality at all. Contradictory to this sentiment, other Group 4 members said,

*As far as I know, people with visual impairment . . . some of them are highly sexual . . . I mean, they just are hyper when it comes to sex . . . it is like they are compensating for lack of sight with it [giggles]. (G4S6)*

*Yah . . . I think so too. People with any type of disability seem to compensate for that by being very active sexually [roaring laughter]. (G2S7)*

The student teachers' discussions in this regard highlighted their beliefs regarding people with disabilities or visual impairments. Such constructions highlighted their socialisation and lived experiences in their communities in relation to the sexual lives of people with disabilities.

The last group of student teachers, Group 5, performed a lesson on sexual desire and pleasure. Their performance aimed at portraying the importance of incorporating sexual desire and pleasure into safer sex practices. They presented a teacher in a classroom asking learners about the use of condoms during



sex, or lack thereof. The learners argued that condoms were disruptive to the rhythm of sex and thus were usually not used. The teacher then talked about including condoms during foreplay and making them part of the game of sex. While the teacher tried to remain composed during the presentation, the learners and the audience seemed uncomfortable, with lots of giggling and hushed remarks about the lesson. When asked about their choice of theme, Group 5 members argued thus:

*We decided to teach about this topic because we think it is important in safer sex . . . if sex is safe then it can be enjoyable [giggling]. (G5S2)*

*We know that the teenagers in schools are having sex, and it is not protected. . . but . . . uhm . . . we want them to . . . if they cannot abstain, they should use condoms. They should know that condoms do not disrupt sex, but make it safer and fun [uncomfortable laughter]. (G5S1)*

*I think it is better to teach them . . . I think associating the use of condoms with sexual pleasure can help the learners to be safe from pregnancy and STIs . . . but . . . yah . . . it is not easy to talk to amakhwenkwe [boys, uncircumcised] about the fun of sex. (G5S4)*

*Our group thinks this is an important theme and the teacher in our play catered for all learners by talking to the class about how to include condoms in foreplay . . . so . . . yah. (G5S3)*

The presentation by Group 5 elicited uproarious laughter from the audience and the group members who were acting as learners. It was visible that the teacher was trying her best to remain composed during the presentation and not give in to laughter. The discomfort portrayed by all the student teachers during this presentation was testament to the taboo nature of sex talk, especially talking about sexual desire and pleasure across generations.

When all groups had presented their plays, I asked the whole class whether any of the groups had portrayed a situation that was inclusive of visually impaired adolescents. Some student teachers argued that using a lecture method was suitable for the learners because they could hear the teacher's voice. However, some of the student teachers commented that all presentations had depicted what they were comfortable with, not what was suitable for visually impaired adolescents. This became a teachable moment during the lecture where the student teachers were able to acknowledge their discomfort with teaching CSE in classrooms in general and to visually impaired learners in particular. Our discussions are presented in the next theme.

### **Reimagining Accommodative Pedagogies**

The student teachers were asked why they had not used the penis model that was available in the prop box for the lessons on male condom use. They argued that the model was too explicit, and they did not think they would be able to use it in their own classrooms. Despite this, the student teachers acknowledged that their lessons could have been more inclusive and informative with the use of models as teaching aids:

*I think our group decided not to use the models because we felt shy . . . I mean . . . just imagine the learners in class holding those things and . . . yah. (G1S7)*

*It would be like teaching porn in class . . . sjoo . . . that would be too much for us . . . we were not taught like that when we were in high school. (G5S6)*

*But I am sure that using the models would have assisted the other learners to understand what a penis . . . I mean an erect penis feels like [uncomfortable laughter] . . . but sjoo. (G2S7)*

*Yes mam! The learners would understand better, especially the ones with impairment . . . you know . . . with touching the models and putting the condoms on them. (G3S5)*

The student teachers were then asked to reflect on the theatre-in-education prompt and whether their portrayals had responded to it. All the groups agreed that they had focussed much attention on their discomfort of teaching CSE and had forgotten about their target audience. The student teachers acknowledged that what had happened during their theatre-in-education performances was likely to happen in regular classrooms because of teachers' discomfort with CSE and resorting to what came easy to them:

*We completely forgot that we were to present a CSE lesson accommodative of learners with visual impairment. (G2S6)*

*Imagine! This probably happens in regular classrooms and such learners are forgotten. The teachers just focus on presenting comfortable lessons without thinking about the diversity of learners in their classrooms. (G3S7)*

*I would feel really bad if I had been a visually impaired learner in such classrooms . . . imagine how learners feel daily when they are not included! (G2S1)*

*Sometimes we take things for granted . . . we were not aware that we had literally forgotten about the target group for the lessons . . . this really got me thinking. (G1S6)*

*Wow! This has been an eye-opener for me . . . I mean! We sometimes forget that there are people with special needs that need us to consider their well-being and inclusion. These plays have shown me that there is more to teaching than just delivering the content. (G4S5)*

*When Mam does the demonstrations and asks us to use the models during her lectures, it makes the lesson real! I think we need more practice in using teaching aids that help accommodate all learners. (G5S7)*

*For me . . . I think this drama is also good for teaching such sensitive subjects . . . you see, the learners . . . they experience the reality of what could happen . . . it becomes real, like . . . they touch these models, they talk and express their views. (G1S7)*

These discussions highlight the student teachers' reflections on how they had resorted to their comfort zones, despite the clarity of the prompt for their presentations. They also highlight the student teachers' rethinking of their approach to teaching CSE in their classrooms towards more inclusive pedagogies.

## Discussion

The findings of the study show that the student teachers are uncomfortable with teaching CSE. They highlighted several issues that impacted their vulnerability, including their religion and culture. This is in line with what has been argued by Bhana et al. (2019) that religious and cultural beliefs in communities construct sexuality as a taboo subject thus making it difficult for the effective implementation of CSE in schools by teachers. The male student teachers' socialisation through the

traditional initiation school meant that they were considered adults and could not talk about sex across generations (see also Baxen, 2010; Khau, 2012). It has been argued by scholars across the globe that teachers face challenges regarding the teaching of CSE due to the constructions of sexuality within their communities (Baxen, 2010; Epstein et al., 2003; Khau, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2004; Paechter, 2004).

The prompt for the theatre-in-education performances was general enough to allow the student teacher groups to decide on a theme of their choice. The necessary assistive devices for use in a CSE classroom for adolescents with visual impairments were provided, but the student teachers did not use them due to their discomfort in using such teaching aids. While this happened in an enacted classroom performance, it portrayed the possibilities of what could happen in reality in CSE classrooms. The fact that the student teachers focussed on how they had been taught and what they were comfortable with, instead of on their audience, aligns with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which shapes people's future actions. The student teachers were socialised into heteropatriarchal communities that construct human sexuality as a shameful and taboo subject (Parikh, 2005). Although creating challenges for the effective delivery of CSE in the classroom, this socialisation is maintained because the student teachers have vested interest in it. They stand to gain respect by upholding the respectful and good adulthood norms in their communities by not leading learners astray through sex-talk (Epstein et al., 2003; Francis & De Palma, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2004).

Teachers have a vested interest in playing in the field of good manhood and womanhood in their communities and thus do not use the different types of capital they have to teach CSE effectively in their classrooms (Khau, 2012). The student teachers in this study exemplified this by privileging the scripts of good womanhood and manhood at the expense of good teacher-hood (Baxen, 2010; Khau, 2012). Although they could have employed any of the available props to teach CSE to adolescents with visual impairments, they privileged their socialisation that constructs young people as sexually innocent and in need of protection (Mitchell et al., 2004) from sexually explicit sex talk and teaching aids.

Even though CSE is grounded in a human rights-based approach (Kirby, 2008), its delivery in many schools globally does not cater to the rights of learners with disabilities in general, and learners with visual impairment, in particular. Teachers in schools, and the student teachers in this study, were socialised in an ableist world that constructs people with disabilities as abnormal (Human Rights Watch, 2015), thus positioning them as the other in society and classrooms. The othering of those living with disabilities leads to their neglect and discrimination—as attested to by the student teachers' unintentional sidelining of learners with visual impairments in their theatre-in-education performances. The discrimination meted against people with disabilities is exacerbated in CSE classrooms where adolescents with disabilities are constructed as children needing protection, or as people with asexual or hyper-sexed bodies who do not need CSE (Howell et al., 2006). Due to the construction of disabled bodies as abnormal, they are placed on the periphery of society in many avenues, despite the ratification of laws against the discrimination of people with disabilities (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

## Conclusion

In this article I explored student teachers' understandings and perceptions of teaching CSE to adolescents with visual impairments, using drama pedagogy. The purpose of using drama pedagogy was to enable the student teachers to unleash their agency in selecting a theme, deciding on how to perform, and transforming their own thinking regarding the teaching of CSE to learners with visual impairments. The student teachers chose, created, and performed different thematic plays on sexuality education. Their performances showed the student teachers' understandings of the content of CSE and their perceptions of how to deliver such content in their classrooms in general, and to

learners with visual impairment, in particular. While the prompt for the theatre-in-education performances was open, the student teachers chose themes and portrayals with which they were comfortable. Their cultural and religious socialisations overpowered their training as inclusive teachers.

Despite CSE's effectiveness in curbing early sexual debut, unwanted pregnancies, and STIs, it is not generally perceived in a positive light by all stakeholders, especially government and religious leaders who believe that it encourages promiscuity and a laissez-faire attitude to sexuality (Lesko, 2010; Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2008). Teachers socialised in communities that pathologise sex and sexuality privilege their own comfort when teaching CSE. This makes the offering of CSE by such teachers problematic in schools for all learners—but more so for learners with disabilities. When teachers are afraid of teaching CSE under normal conditions, it becomes even more challenging for them to offer the subject in an inclusive classroom setting. This creates a multiplicity of disadvantages for learners with disabilities, who are constructed as asexual or hyper-sexual, if they are not accommodated in the teaching CSE. They become vulnerable to STIs including HIV and AIDS, sexual abuse, and unwanted pregnancies. Adolescents with disabilities cannot remain the forgotten group. Their right to comprehensive sexuality education is necessary now, so that they can contribute to the sustainable development of their countries.

This study has highlighted the need for concerted efforts in teacher education institutions to emphasise inclusive and creative pedagogies in teaching all subjects, and more so in teaching CSE. Such a rethinking of pedagogies would enable all learners and students to enjoy healthy and pleasurable sexual lives and reduced incidences of sexual violence within relationships. Effectively implemented CSE can assist nations in achieving gender equality as a cornerstone in achieving the different Sustainable Development Goals.

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