

## Hearing Voices Inside Schools: Issues of Sexuality in Upper Classes in Primary Schools in Botswana

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### Abstract

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The absence and or presence of sexuality education in our curriculum have provoked several debates within the Botswana society. Some people feel that issues of sexuality should be incorporated in our school curriculum while others believe that they should not. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the teachers' and students' perceptions on issues of sexuality in primary schools in Botswana. The study focused on teachers and students in selected primary schools in Northern and Central regions of the country. The study was qualitative in nature and employed the naturalistic inquiry paradigm. This study used transformative academic knowledge for its conceptual framework. Snowball or chain sampling was used for the selection of the participants. Data were collected using qualitative methods which included interviews, participants' observation, focus groups and a grounded survey. Data were analyzed inductively using grounded theory through the constant comparative technique. The major finding of the study revealed that there is an intergenerational conflict of ideas and views between teachers' and students' pertaining to issues of sexuality in primary schools in Botswana. The conclusion drawn from this study is that the discussion on issues of sexuality remains a topical and deeply controversial issue among teachers and students in primary schools. The study, therefore, recommends that the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoE&SD) should consider formalizing and infusing sexuality education within the primary school curriculum.

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**Keywords:** Primary education, Sexuality, Sexual orientation, Teachers' perceptions, Transformative academic knowledge, Naturalistic inquiry

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### 1. Introduction

Botswana strives to incorporate the millennium development goal of education; to provide equal opportunities for both boys and girls in schools and to achieve universal basic primary education where all children have access to education and are able to complete a full course of primary education. There are a variety of skills that young people and adults need to acquire for sustainable human and economic development. Unfortunately, whatever skills have been achieved so far are being undermined by the fact young people in Botswana are at present the hardest hit population in terms of prevalence of HIV/AIDS and its rate of new infections. The fact that youth are hard hit and mostly in school or have recently left school is an indictment on, among others, the education system. It is reasonable to question the adequacy of the skills and the attitudes that are taught in the schools if bad choices are made in spite of the benefits of education (EFA, Country Report- Botswana, 2000). Sexuality education for all children is viewed as a crucial component of any quality education system as "it aims to prepare young people for responsible, healthy and productive citizenship" (Goldman, 2010, p. 47).

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Quality sexuality education programs encompass a range of aspects including among the many; sexual development, self-management and safety, interpersonal relationships, identity, communication and negotiation skills, body image and self-esteem, intimacy, resilience, gender/citizen roles and moral/ethical values (Goldman, 2010). Majority of youth complete their primary education without adequate knowledge on sexuality issues and without adequate life-planning skills. Information about sexuality and the ability to communicate are essential for youth to act responsibly when faced with difficult decisions. In order for youth to understand their physical and emotional development, understand sexuality issues, manage relationships and peer pressure, and protect themselves and their partners', they need fundamental knowledge of sexuality and reproductive health, and the decision making, communication and relationship skills necessary to manage relationships and social pressures (IMF, 2000). Issues of sexuality undergird every sphere of the contemporary livelihoods of a globalized society. The media, more especially television and internet often feature soapy opera's on sexuality, as well as demonstrations/ protests on gay and lesbian rights across the continent and the world at large. This information when broadcast on television, internet or radio, it is not restricted to a certain age group. It has become apparent that our students from a tender age watch these films. In Botswana the most popular South African soapy that is mostly watched by children is "Generations" and depicts issues of sexual orientation. This, therefore, is indicative of the fact that our students are aware of the reality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people as a part of the society they live in. The "don't tell them" or "they are still young" approach to the curriculum on issues that affect the students' lives is no longer feasible in this global age as students need a place to dialogue and discuss these controversial issues if indeed we aim at developing an informed and knowledgeable citizenry. The classroom, therefore, becomes a viable space in which children can openly discuss such issues and gain an understanding of the reality of the contemporary world they live in.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Teaching controversial topics like sexuality has always been a challenge to teachers. It has been observed that many teachers in primary schools in Botswana are still very far from making meaningful dialogue with students on issues of sexuality that are relevant to their daily life experiences. Students' questions on issues of sexuality remain unanswered because some teachers are afraid of discussing sexuality issues with students. Teachers have also raised concerns about students asking questions on sex relationships because the students see these on mass media like television (Mhlauli, 2010). It has been observed that despite the evidence of the desire to provide HIV and AIDS education in schools, there are various obstacles faced by developing countries like Botswana. In an overcrowded curriculum, the subject of sex education and HIV and AIDS is considered controversial. Information is taught but coverage is incomplete and the curriculum is of poor quality (Muchado, 2002). A teacher described her students as curious and always bringing in issues that she is not comfortable in discussing, "Actually at first I could not talk about sex related issues openly in my class, so it is them who came up with those issues about sexuality, they talked about bisexuality and homosexuality because they watch those from television and they talk about men being interested in another men, the same person being interested in the men and women. They asked if it is good and whether they do have sexual intercourse. I told them that I do not know, but I know that they do have sex. The problem is discussing this issue with students" (Mhlauli, 2010). The thinking and attitude of our students is changing daily, they are assertive and they need answers to these questions. There has been very little research into the socio-cultural constraints faced by primary school teachers when teaching sexuality topics. Students as observed have expressed their concerns through questions. What is not readily known is the effect of these concerns, does it affect the students' learning or social life; are we hearing or listening to our students? When should we discuss sexuality issues in the classroom? This study would therefore, endeavor to explore perceptions about this controversial topic with regard to how our education system can begin to address the developmental needs of our today's' students.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore perceptions of teachers and students about sexuality in primary schools.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions will be used to guide the study:

#### 1.3.1 What are the teachers' conceptions of sexuality in primary schools in Botswana?

- 1.3.2 What are the students' conceptualizations of sexuality in primary schools?
- 1.3.3 What issues of sexuality are taught in their classrooms?
- 1.3.4 What are the socio-cultural constraints faced by teachers in teaching about sexuality issues?
- 1.3.5 What do students and teachers think should be done to make their curriculum more responsive to their needs?

#### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study sought to:

- 1.4.1 Explore the teachers' perceptions on sexuality in primary schools in Botswana
- 1.4.2 To understand the students' conceptualizations of sexuality in schools
- 1.4.3 To identify issues of sexuality that are taught in schools
- 1.4.4 To suggest curricular implications for sexuality education in schools

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This study uses transformative academic knowledge to interrogate the teachers' and students' perceptions and conceptualizations on sexuality in primary schools. "Transformative academic knowledge consists of paradigms and explanations that challenge some of the key epistemological assumptions of mainstream knowledge" (Banks, 2008, p.135). It is said to challenge mainstream knowledge that seem to perpetuate and expand the historical and literary canon. Transformative academic knowledge is content that when presented challenges the traditional interpretations that are seen as universalistic and unrelated to human interests (Marri, 2008). It enables students to acquire information, skills and values to challenge inequality within their communities, nations and the world; to develop cosmopolitan values and perspectives; and to take actions to create just and democratic multicultural communities and societies (Banks, 2008). Therefore, this querying nature of transformative academic knowledge makes it an invaluable tool for interrogating the teachers and students' perceptions of sexuality issues as it will assist in knowledge construction that is context specific.

## 3. Literature Review

Sexuality education in schools is lacking. To date, despite the policy introduced in 1993 to include HIV and AIDS education in the national curriculum, there is no evidence yet of its practicability and there appears to be some resistance to its implementation that may be attributed to the socio-cultural constructs of the society. An educational program with STD, HIV, and AIDS requires that students have an understanding of their own physical and emotional development during adolescence, so that they can gain insight into their own and others' sexuality. Ministry of Education and Skills Development is required to incorporate AIDS and STD education into all educational institutions and involve parents. Traditionally parents do not communicate any sex education to their children. Sex education to adolescents is provided by designated adults, most frequently relatives. It is considered a "taboo" for parents to be involved (Mhlauli, 2010). However, urban migration and changing family relationships have contributed to the demise of this traditional instruction (WCC, 2000). There is resistance to teach sex education among teachers and restrictions to open discussions about sexual matters. According to Daniel, et al. (2005) strong religious norms restrict the open discussion of sex in Nigerian society. Children are not supposed to ask their parents questions about sex and sexuality, and parents do not discuss sex and sexuality with their children. It is all a matter of silence, and "wait and see". Implicitly, too, teachers are not expected to teach sex education to their students. Milton (2002) study on sex education for primary school children revealed that mothers say, sexuality was a difficult topic to discuss, often because they had not had any sex education from their parents when they were young. They wanted to talk to their children but didn't know how; some mothers said that children were reluctant to talk with them, possibly due to embarrassment. The issue of sex education is a concern to the government of Botswana and school dropouts due to teenage pregnancy are extremely common in Botswana. In the sentinel survey studies carried out in antenatal clinics throughout Botswana, the number of unmarried pregnant youth is exceptionally high, accounting for over 78% of all clients and within this group, the HIV prevalence is highest in all test sites with ranges from 39.2%- 51.9%. Clearly there is an urgent need to address issues of sexuality as they pertain to youth. If education programs succeed in doing nothing more than encouraging youth to delay sexual debut, their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS can be substantially reduced (WCC, 2000). The current practices when it comes to girls lead to experiences of victimization, teenage pregnancy and increased dropout levels which consequently exacerbate the vulnerability of the girl-child (Fine, 2011).

According to the Director of Health Services of Botswana (September, 2001), the government is in the process of introducing family health education into the school curriculum to teach sex education in a comfortable cultural approach.

However, sex education is not enough as it is narrow in scope as compared to sexuality education. World-wide issues of sexuality are covered within the school curriculum. In Australia sexuality education became part of the school curriculum in the 1970's and 1980's and is part of the overall teaching responsibility for teachers. Teachers are often assigned sexuality classes as part of their teaching in their various subject areas (Milton et al., 2001). Most schools provide sexuality education based on the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights of children and young people in an effort to maximize their health and educational opportunities (Goldman, 2010). Sexuality education in New-Zealand as a school subject is embedded in the "health and physical education curriculum and is compulsory until the end of year 10 (approximately age 14)" (Allen, 2005, p. 392). In New Zealand sexuality education is differentiated from sex education in that the former includes aspects of promoting health and the socio-ecological perspective whereas sex education only refers to the physical dimension of sexuality education (Allen, 2005). Internationally, in countries Netherlands, Sweden, France and Germany, studies have shown that where there is an open and flexible approach to sexuality education, there has been a drop in teenage pregnancies, and lowest rates of reproductive health problems among the youths (Milton et al., 2001). Numerous authors have suggested strategies that can be used in the teaching of sexuality issues in schools (Goldman, 2010; Wood, 2009; Allen, 2005; Milton et al., 2001). Mayo (2007) provides illuminating strategies that teachers can use in their teaching to navigate through issues of sexuality such as gay-centered topics which include:

- Mentioning certain famous people who are/were gays or lesbians
- Taking advantage of "teachable moments" by using current issues in the news such as same-sex marriages for discussion
- Taking advantage of courses such as abnormal psychology and discuss how homosexuality was diagnosed as abnormal behavior. This allows students to discuss historical figures like Alexander The Great and William Shakespeare (p. 452)

The use of sexuality-centered pedagogies where a more relaxed classroom atmosphere is promoted is encouraged. Sexuality education also "demands a relatively informal teaching style, where the normal hierarchy between student and teacher is relaxed so that young people can talk more openly about this private subject" (Allen, 2005). Teachers are therefore, challenged to insure that they enlighten students and promote ways to broaden their scope of understanding issues of diversity, critical analysis of different ways of thought and negate the effects of racism, sexism and homophobia (Mayo, 2007). Brayboy (2005) further advocates for more empowering strategies in teaching sexuality education such as debates, to sharpen the students' critical thinking skills and develop perspective consciousness. Teachers are also encouraged to move beyond their socio-cultural constraints to seek more workable and appropriate ways to educate learners to be critically aware themselves (Woods, 2009).

#### 4. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design primarily because it provides the opportunity to observe selected informants' daily interactions and behaviors in their natural setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research is said to be multi-method in focus which involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Creswell, 1998). In this case, teachers and students were observed in their natural setting which is their schools and classrooms to try and understand their values, beliefs and experiences on sexuality education in Botswana. Rather than reporting statistics, qualitative research enables the researcher to present the results in a narrative fashion, rich with descriptive data, emergent themes and story lines (Patton, 1990). The rationale behind qualitative inquiry is based on the premise that behavior is significantly influenced by the context within which it occurs. The study adopted the naturalistic inquiry paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Naturalistic inquiry is said to demand a natural setting. This is so because "phenomena of study, whatever they may be-physical, chemical, biological, social, psychological- *take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves*" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 189). Lincoln & Guba further hold the view that naturalistic inquirers begin their research with the belief that constructions of realities cannot be separated from the world in which they occur or are experienced therefore emphasizing the relationship between time and context to understanding the phenomena under study.

#### 4.1 Participants' Selection

Purposive sampling was used to select the teachers and students who participated in this study. This type of sampling requires that one establishes a criteria, bases, or standards necessary for units to be included in the investigation (Patton, 1990). We used set criteria for the selection of teachers and students as articulated below.

Teachers were selected using set criteria as shown below:

1. Evidence of substantive teaching for at least five years
2. Teach upper primary classes (Standard 5-7)

Students were selected using the criteria indicated below:

1. Students in upper classes (standard 5-7)
2. Students above the age of 10 years
3. Students with interest on issues of sexuality

There are different strategies used in purposive sampling and for this study snowball or chain sampling was used to select the participants. The teachers were identified at the beginning and requested to refer the researchers to other teachers in other schools who meet the set criteria. After identifying such teachers, they will be interviewed individually to get the final group that will participate in the study. We will then request those identified as potential participants if they would like to participate in the study. The teachers identified will then refer the teachers to the potential students who may be interested in partaking in the study. Such students were requested through the school-head to request their parents to meet with the researchers. The Researchers then met with the parents individually to request their permission to allow their students to be participants in the study. After getting permission from the parents, the researchers asked the students if they were interested in participating in the study.

#### 4.2. Data Collection Procedures

In this study, individual interviews, focus groups, and a grounded survey were used in order to explore the teachers' and students' perceptions of sexuality in schools. The grounded survey was used on both teachers and students at the beginning of the study to serve as a barometer for knowledge on sexuality issues. A reflexive journal was also kept to capture the methodological learning and also keep the study in focus.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis

This study adopted grounded theory techniques for data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Data analysis involved making sense of what the researcher has seen, heard, and read. It also required analyzing, categorizing, synthesizing, searching for patterns and interpreting the data (Glesne, 1999). Data were analyzed inductively using the constant comparative analysis technique (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990). Data were transcribed immediately after collection, coded and categorized in order to inform the next interviews and focus groups. The constant comparative analysis is explained as a process that "combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed and coded (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.256). Data analysis took place at the same time with data collection and questions raised during transcription will be used to shape the questions for the next interviews. For the survey, SPSS was used to analyze the data.

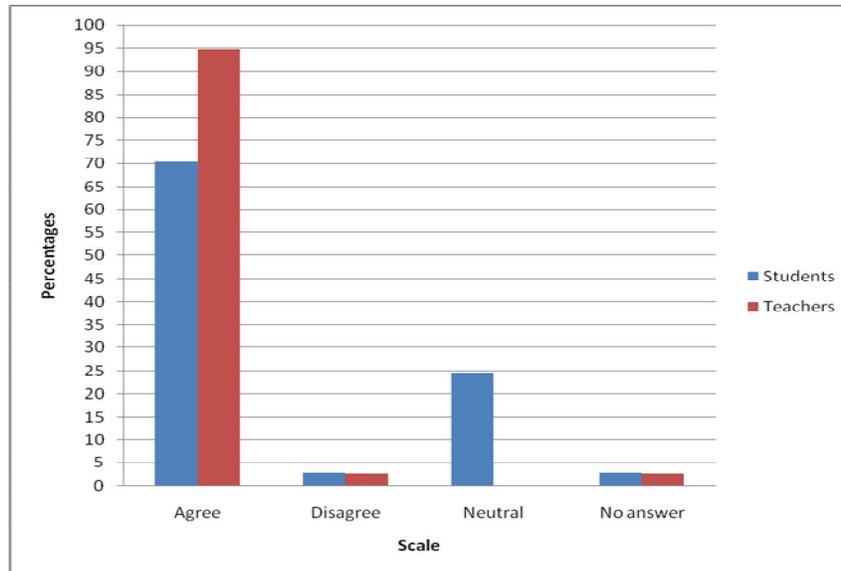
### 5. Findings and Discussions

From the data analysis, the major findings clearly indicated that there was an intergenerational gap between teachers and students regarding issues of sexuality. Teachers found themselves in a tight position where they were unable to talk about issues of sexuality which they deemed controversial whereas students wanted to discuss such issues. One issue that teachers tended to avoid talking about is that of sexual orientation while students on the other hand enjoyed talking about it. Even when probed in their focus group discussions, teachers were uncomfortable and reluctant to discuss issues about gays, homosexuals, transgender and lesbians. They confided in us that they do not talk about "such" issues and the use of "such" carried negative connotations in that it indicated that such topics were abominable and found it difficult to even pronounce such words. Students were keen to know more about issues of sexuality and often asked teachers questions about what they heard or saw on television.

The findings are discussed according to the themes generated from the major finding of the study as shown below:

Theme1: Conceptions of Sexuality: "Sexuality is about relationships".

Students define sexuality as relationships while teachers define it as sex education. Students conceptualized sexuality in terms of sexual orientation hence they see it as “boy/girl relationships”; girl/girl (lesbians); boy/boy (gays); sexual harassment; sexually transmitted infections(STI’s) and HIV/AIDS. Students perceive sexuality in terms of sexual orientation and all the things that go with having sexual relationships such as STI’s and HIV/AIDS. This signals a departure from what students are expected to know and what they are thought to really know. Their conception of sexuality challenges the teachers’ belief of the “don’t tell them” approach to knowing. Teachers on the other hand conceptualized sexuality as sex education, sexual reproduction, maturity and HIV/AIDS. Figure 1 below augments the findings from interviews and focus group discussions in that it shows that both teachers and students understand the meaning of sexuality.



**Figure 1: Understanding Sexuality**

From these findings it is evident that teachers are economic in terms of what they perceive to be sexuality and prefer to remain politically correct by relating it to what they believe is socially and culturally acceptable as opposed to bringing in controversy or “taboo”. These findings are indicative of the fact that there is an intergenerational gap emanating from what students already know and what teachers expect them to know. This finding corroborates that of a study conducted among young New Zealanders where it was found that those students conceptualized effective sexuality in ways that sometimes diverged from those of the adults who design and implement such a curriculum. Therefore, requesting that they be treated as “*sexual subjects*” whose sexuality is not constituted “*as a problem*” and be taught more explicit and “*real life*” sexual knowledge (Allen, 2005). It becomes imperative that students be made aware of such issues in order for them to make choices of what they want to know and discuss as opposed to being denied information that they desire to know. It should be borne in mind that for sexuality education to be meaningful to the learners it must meet their needs and interests as conceptualized by them (Allen, 2005). The failure of any program to meet the learners’ needs and interest through their engagement in sexuality matters on content, structure and delivery may lead to an ill-conceived program that does not address the students’ day to day challenges, experiences and encounters.

Theme 2: Students Knowledge on Issues of Sexuality: “We talk about what we see in the media, social networks and pictures of sexual expression”.

From the findings, it was evident that the students’ knowledge on sexuality issues is influenced to a large extent by media and peers. Students talked about issues they discuss with their peers emanating from what they watch in the media. During their focus group discussions, one of the students said: I would say myself as an individual; I interact with media such as television, radio and books...

Another student had this to say:

I like watching television; it gives us some information. I was watching SABC2, there is this news called "Its Yours", it was talking about gays and lesbians. The people were saying they could not live with the gays and lesbians. They were saying those people are not the same...

One girl mentioned that:

On BTV, I saw on the news at 7 pm on the headlines that two men were being sent to jail for being gay and they wanted to get married.

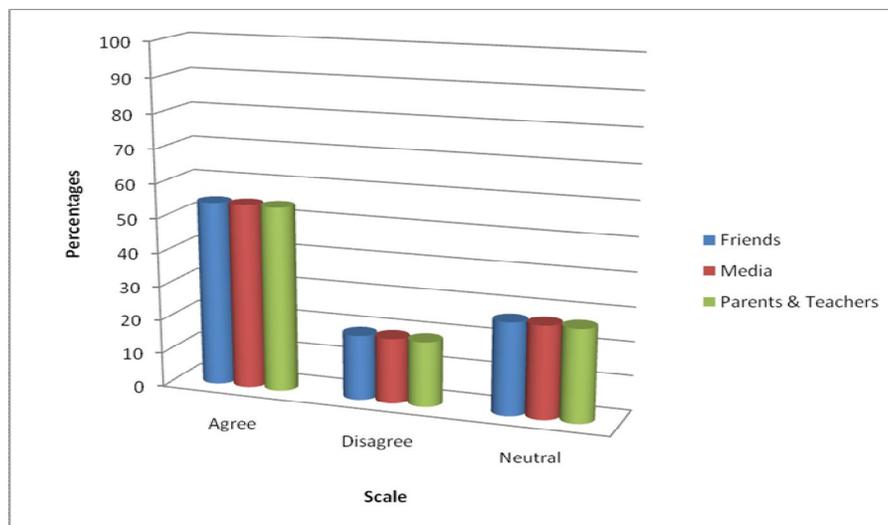
One boy interjected and said:

Yes, it was i think in Uganda where they were being jailed.

A girl responded by saying:

I want to add on his point, separating gays and lesbians from people who are married to a man and woman is not good because that will be discrimination and everyone has a right to choose what she or he wants to do if that is not illegal...

From the vignettes above, it is evident that students have knowledge about issues of sexuality beyond what teachers teach them. Figure 2 below shows some variation in terms of influence on students as it indicates that the media, friends, parents and teachers to a large extent have a bearing in what they talk about concerning issues of sexuality. Very few students remained neutral and disagreed with the statement.



**Figure 2: Students talk about Sexuality**

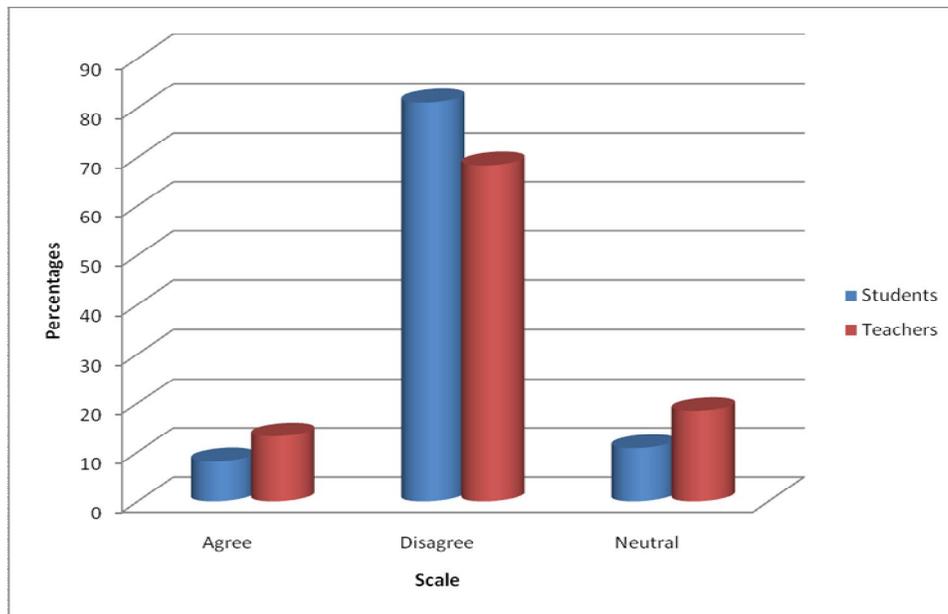
Teachers admitted to students knowing more about issues of sexuality as they are often caught viewing pictures on sexual expression, a situation that is undesirable for teachers. One teacher noted that: Yes, these students bring pictures of different sexual expression to class and engage in sexual harassment about what they see in the media. Another teacher mentioned that: They use social media such as Facebook and other social networks to talk about sexual issues. From what the teachers said, it is clear that students bring in information that they do not accept in school. These findings corroborate Milton et al (2001) contention "that young people draw on many sources for their sexuality education..." Teachers alluded to the fact that they teach their students about teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases because they are in the curriculum. The ability of teachers to ignore what students already know is tantamount to a crime as they deny students the opportunity to engage one another on issues of their interest which affect their everyday life experiences. The denial of these students a platform in the classroom to discuss issues of sexuality forces them to go and find information from the media and peers and such information lacks guidance. Therefore, their knowledge on sexuality issues is self-taught, lacks guidance and maybe detrimental to the moral fiber of the society they live in.

This scenario experienced in schools leaves children susceptible to increased rates of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies (Goldman, 2010) which are predominantly common in schools in Botswana. It is important to allow classrooms to be microcosms of debate, dialogue, discussion and deliberation in order to refine the students' knowledge on various issues they encounter as beings. It should be understood that when teachers are uncomfortable talking about sexuality issues they may contribute to the students' resentment at being denied valid information about sexual issues (Allen, 2005).

Theme 3: Inadequate Coverage of Sexuality Issues: "The curriculum does not cover issues of intergenerational sex".

During interviews, teachers mentioned that they discuss with about sexuality issues with their students through sex education and these issues include teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and its prevention, STD's, nutrition, prenatal and postnatal issues and family planning. However, they did mention that they did not teach about rights, gays and lesbians and consequences of discriminating gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered (GLBT's). Though students mentioned that they are taught about sexuality, their views contradicted those of teachers' that they teach about sexuality issues as they felt that the curriculum is inadequate in that it does not address intergenerational sex issues and GLBT's. To them intergenerational sex was important as it affected many children where you find young boys and girls having sexual relationships with older people (*Sugar Mummies and Sugar Daddies*). The students further argued that the inability of the curriculum to address issues of sexuality such as intergenerational sex and gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered (GLBT's) was a violation of the fundamental basic human rights. This is what students had to say in their focus group discussions:...the gays and lesbians have a right to freedom of movement but some people discriminate their rights or violate them and say they don't belong ... there is no teaching about sexuality in our school I think people who think that gays and lesbians is wrong, need to rethink because culture is dynamic, it changes from one generation. They should know that they are hurting other peoples' feelings if they make laws that other people don't agree with. I would say the government in some particular countries who say that the gays and lesbians are illegal, they should think again... We are not taught about sexuality in school.

Students feel that the curriculum does not adequately address important issues on sexuality (*See figure 3 below*).



**Figure 3: Curriculum Coverage of Sexuality Issues**

Figure 3 above clear shows that teachers and students are in agreement that the curriculum does not adequately cover issues of sexuality. Students believe that the perception that sexuality issues are taboo or regarded in some African countries as illegal are backward and barbaric as they ignore other people's rights under the pretext that they do not conform to the societal norms and cultures.

It should be understood that schools and the curriculum in particular, act as mirrors of the society and through their rigid structures of dominant masculinity traits and stereotypes force teachers to conform to their notions of "hegemonic masculinity" which is deemed as appropriate qualities of a "man" (Mayo, 2007). Therefore, the curriculum teaches what is deemed correct and acceptable to the society.

The absence or deficiency of any curriculum to provide a well-rounded education program can result in ignorance, fear, lack of understanding, low-level decision-making and poor decisions and susceptibility to abuse (Goldman, 2010). The omission of the curriculum of certain issues on sexuality leaves out some students from belonging and being part of the curriculum they learn hence contravening the United Nations special and specific legal rights to information, protection, health and education for children (UNCRC, 1990).

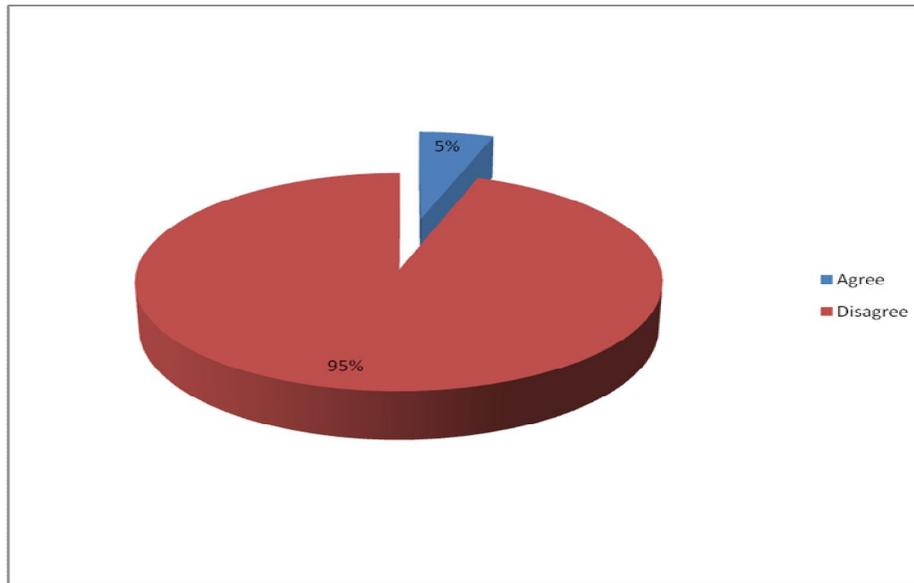
Theme 4: Teaching about Sexuality: "It is difficult to teach about sexuality".

Teachers mentioned that it was difficult to teach or discuss about issues of sexuality in their classrooms. Teachers tended to express fear of teaching sensitive issues such as sexuality as it is not in the curriculum and parents may not like the idea. Almost all the teachers mentioned that they would not discuss or teach about homosexuality, gays or lesbians because they are against their culture. During focus group discussions while probing on issues of sexuality, one of the male teachers equated same sex relationships with an act of sin and had this to say:

I usually infuse issues of sex education and this includes teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and sexually transmitted diseases. I never talk about same sex relationships because I am not comfortable with such issues. I feel it is a practice of Satanism or related to Satanism. From long time back we only know a man should be married to a wife. This is just out of hand! Talking about such things will be bringing negative things to the students. I don't think they should be included in the curriculum because pupils may try to practice them. From the excerpt above, it was vividly clear that the teacher was annoyed by the discussion on same sex relationships and did not even want to talk about such issues. From his utterances and outbursts, one cannot avoid thinking how the teacher would react if he was asked by a student. It can be deduced from the teacher's response that indeed sexuality issues are not only sensitive but controversial. Another gentleman shared similar sentiments using religion and the notion that Botswana is a Christian country to advance his argument said: Issues of homosexuals are new in our society that's why there is resentment on them. Honestly, I never teach about same sex issues or marriages because I don't know why they happen. This is wrong and students should be discouraged from them. Since Botswana is a Christian country, it is stated in the bible that marriage is between a man and a woman, to have same sex marriages is against our beliefs and culture.

Another Male teacher insisted that he did not talk about same sex relationships because they are not in the syllabus and against his culture and religion. His comments were:

I do not discuss such issues because *they are not part of the curriculum* and I also do not see the importance of talking about them. Same sex marriages or relationships are not good to the society since they go against the society's culture sometimes I even wonder how they reproduce. In Botswana these things are unacceptable and very recently there were demonstrations against gays and lesbians by churches in Botswana, this is an indication that they are against our culture because Botswana is a Christian country and follow the bible. In the bible it is clearly stated that marriage is between a man and a woman, what are these people trying to teach our children? They copy things from other countries and want to bring them here. The excerpt above shows that teachers also see same sex issues as part of Western influence and blame students for copying other cultures. A female teacher who described herself as a Christian saw same sex relationships as immoral had this to say: I do not discuss such issues because I am not comfortable talking about them. I am a Christian and I grew up knowing that a man should marry a woman not gays, lesbians or homo sexuality. According to me this is a sin and children should not be taught about such issues. They are also illegal in our country, against our culture and immoral. All these were found to hinder the teaching of sexuality education, therefore, depriving students of the necessary information that prepares them for knowledge on cultural diversity and pluralism. In contrast, the results from the questionnaire indicated that teachers are able to teach about issues of sexuality in their classrooms (*See figure 4 below*).



**Figure 4: Teaching Sexuality**

From figure 4 above, it is noteworthy that there are contradictions between what teachers say they do and what actually transpires in their classrooms. This is evidenced by their responses in the interview and questionnaire which are in total disagreement. Therefore, negating the idea that they are conversant with issues of sexuality in the curriculum and raising questions as to whether teachers do understand what they do and their practices in schools. It is interesting that in talking about their culture they tended to make reference to Christianity, immorality and sin. Teachers also described themselves as Christians and their country as a Christian country. The notion of *Batswana* seeing themselves as Christians clearly shows the extent to which modernization has permeated the very fabric of the Botswana society and the subsequent advancement of the new imperialism. This is very interesting in that these teachers are unaware of the fact that Christianity and colonialism in Botswana are inseparable as missionaries paved way for the colonization of the Batswana lands.

**Theme 5: Impediments/Challenges towards teaching about Sexuality: "Teaching is not skill oriented"**

The teacher's pedagogical approaches were seen as vital to combating the challenges of sexuality education in primary schools. Teachers' views on some of the challenges of teaching about sexuality can be categorized into three; cultural, social and structural. Teachers delineated some of the challenges that militate against the teaching of sexuality as; the packed time-table, teachers' lack of background knowledge on sexuality, curriculum that is restricted by objectives, the high stakes/examination oriented curriculum (*Structural*) and societal norms and values (*Cultural*) and religious issues (*Social*). They further argued that the situation is exacerbated by the fact that teaching in their classrooms is not skill oriented. One female teacher contended that:

You see, our teaching does not equip students with skills. We just talk about the risks involved in sex...

Another male teacher commented that:

We don't teach specific skills like assertiveness, we talk about dangers of early sex...

One other female teacher said that:

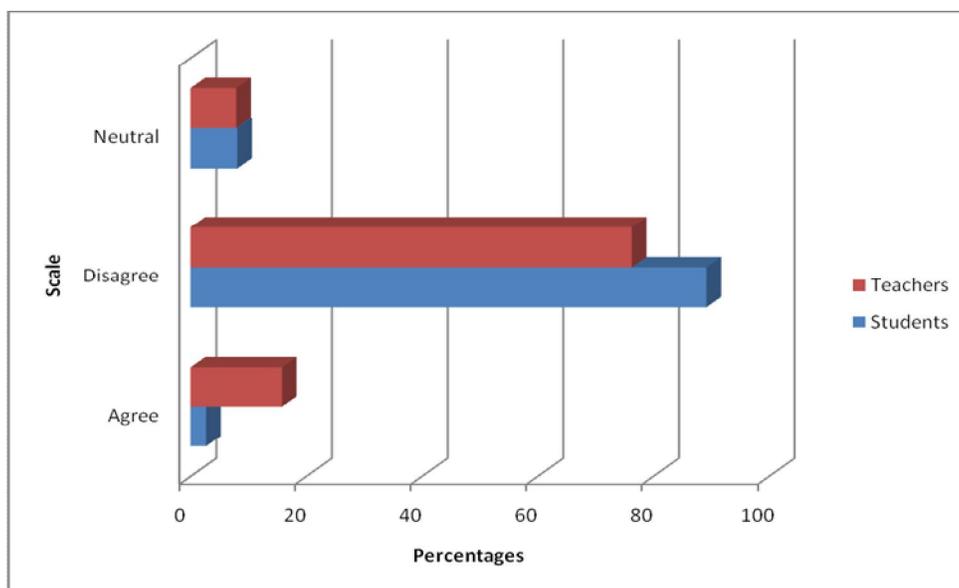
Issues of culture do not allow us to teach about sex education and we are unable to develop life skills among students on sexuality. Students on the other hand saw the teachers silence and over protection on teaching about sexuality as a major impediment towards being taught about sexuality. They argued that the subject is not implemented as teachers avoid sensitive issues or topics on sexuality. One of the male students in one of the focus group discussions burst out and exclaimed that:

...to tell the truth! Teachers really lack background knowledge on sexuality issues

Another female student said that:

Teachers are afraid of teaching sensitive topics on sexuality. When we ask them questions they tell us to wait until we are old enough....

From the vignettes of students, it is evident that their major impediment towards being taught about sexuality emanates from the teachers' fear. However, results from the questionnaire depict a totally different scenario from those of the focus group discussions and interviews for students and teachers. Figure 5 below, clearly indicates that both students and teachers disagree with the statement that teachers are afraid to teach about sexuality. These results are a contradiction in that in their interviews, both teachers and students lamented that the major impediments towards the teaching of sexuality was the teachers' reluctance to teach about sexuality due to the fact that they are afraid of teaching about the issue as it is sensitive. These results totally negate the belief that sexuality is a sensitive issue, yet when spoken about it is a no go area for teachers. Figure 5 below, portrays a true reflection of the contradiction between the data derived from questionnaires and interviews.



**Figure 5: Perceptions on Major Impediments**

The findings as reflected and discussed above show that the teachers and students views on the challenges faced in the teaching of sexuality are indicative of the fact that sexuality in itself is a challenge for teachers to talk about hence the need for teacher education to refocus and re-conceptualize the teaching and development of skills among teachers on how to impart knowledge on sensitive topics like sexuality in their classrooms. Wood (2009) in her study among Xhosa teachers in the Eastern Cape on sexuality found that "teachers repeatedly mentioned that they were hesitant to discuss issues related to sexuality. This was attributed to the fact that traditional Xhosa culture does not encourage adults to speak to children about sex" (p.132). The findings in this study are in agreement with those of Allen (2005) where participants highlighted that some teachers were not well trained in teaching about sexuality and advocated for a more interactive and active approaches to teaching with more discussions rather than passive activities of watching a video or doing worksheets.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The finding of the study indicates that there is an intergenerational gap in knowledge between teachers and students. This is evidenced by the contrast in the students' and teachers' conceptualizations of sexuality; what content is important to be taught and learned; their perceptions on major impediments; and what skills should be covered by the curriculum. From these findings, a conclusion is drawn that even though teachers and students are in agreement that sexually issues are not adequately covered in the curriculum, it should be understood that they are very important, should be included formally in the curriculum and remains a very sensitive issue for teachers to teach in their classrooms.

The following suggestions are made for consideration:

1. Both pre-service and in-service teachers should be equipped with skills on how to teach sensitive and controversial issues. Teacher education has to play a major role in insuring that teachers are prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
2. Sexuality education programs be developed, formalized and infused within the school curriculum as a way of preparing young people for the future challenges in life.
3. Curriculum developers should see to it that sexuality education programs must meet the needs and interests of students as conceptualized by them
4. Students should be involved in curriculum development and evaluation processes in order to enhance relevance and empowerment.
5. Pre-service and In-service teachers should be empowered to be able to use sexuality education centered pedagogies.

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