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The need for culturally sensitive sexuality education in a pluralised Nigeria: But which kind?

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ABSTRACT

A substantial number of studies have been conducted on sexuality education in Nigeria. These provide evidence of the positive impact of sexuality education on the psychosocial well-being of children and youth and the value of sexuality education for the sexual health of young people. Yet another research has investigated the views of parents on the school-based sexuality education of children and the different models and approaches employed. All of these studies implicitly reflect an issue that has not yet been sufficiently discussed. Nigeria is a uniquely pluralised country, with a multitude of cultures and sexual cultures. The implications of this diversity for policy and practice in sexuality education and for how sexuality education has (or has not) responded to this heterogeneity are rarely considered. This article addresses this gap by seeking to conceptualise how sexuality education might proactively address the cultural diversity of Nigeria. It begins by sketching out key features of this diversity in Nigeria and highlights the need for a culturally sensitive approach. Thereafter, there is a critical engagement with three possible approaches that sexuality education might take. Highlighting the weaknesses of monocultural, multicultural and transcultural approaches, this article argues for an open-cultural stance as the best means of fostering culturally sensitive sexuality education.

The close connections between sex education and culture cannot be overemphasised. For Winner and Winner (1976), culture is something meaningful, transmissible, organised and dynamic. In other words, what is referred to as 'culture' is an assemblage of meanings, giving rise to different interpretations and reinforcing particular worldviews. The property of transmissibility affirms that cultures can be learned, taught, shared or acquired. The fact that cultures are organised into systems suggests that they are not merely chaotic configurations of different values and attributes. Elements of a culture often possess some sort of correspondence or coherence to one another. It is this feature of their organisation that enables us to infer meanings from them and identify the worldview associated with them. Finally, all cultures are dynamic. This makes sense when we recall that people are not the passive receptors or transmitters of culture, but rather active participants in cultural systems. Moreover, cultural systems are part of a larger space, which encompasses nature's continuing evolution, and humankind's attempts to survive within it, sometimes through adaptations

that leave footprints on cultural systems. For example, drying riverbeds due to climatic change can modify the cultures surrounding fishing such that fishermen no longer use baited fishing nets to catch fish but, instead, begin to cultivate fishing ponds in which fish are reared. Once this new practice of fishpond cultivation has taken hold, later generations may struggle to understand earlier narratives built around fishing in rivers.

The above example suggests that cultures are built up around important aspect of the human person and community: from food to clothing, from the public domains of sociopolitical organisation and education, to even private matters of sex. Almost nothing human is spared from the matrix of culture. It is within this context that the concept of sexual culture becomes intelligible. Broadly speaking, a sexual culture is a discernible assemblage of meanings, conceptualisations and practices around sex, which is held, shared, lived, communicated, negotiated and even contested within a community. Sexual culture is closely bound with the various ways sexuality is understood, depicted, expressed and even practised. Because of this, whenever sex is mentioned, a sexual culture is automatically referenced or implied. There is therefore a dependency between sexuality education and culture, specifically sexual culture. It is sexual culture that shapes sexuality education. From the social will to conduct sexuality education (or not), to the manner it is conducted and its expected outcomes, there is an underlying sexual culture. To complicate this slightly, sexuality education is not merely the passive receptor of sex culture, as it can critically engage with a sexual culture, and aspire to (and even succeed in) transforming it. This critical engagement may be inspired by another sexual culture and the possible transformation of one sexual culture invariably translates into the adaptation or emergence of another (often hybrid) form. Overall, therefore, culture is 'profoundly involved in the processes and contents of education' continually 'shaping and been shaped by the learning and teaching that happen during the practical conduct of daily life within all the educational settings we encounter' (Erickson 2001, 32).

The fact that sex, sexuality and culture are so deeply intertwined cannot be overemphasised. If the ideas and practices surrounding sex are to be understood, culture has to be engaged with and studied. Sexual ideology is deeply embedded within culture and gains recognition and evaluation from specific types of cultural norms. Culture facilitates the classification of various forms of sexual relationships or practices as either traditionally acceptable or not acceptable. Sometimes, when a particular culture changes, its sexual culture is not affected (Twenge, Sherman, and Wells 2015). On other occasions, when cultural changes occur, they impact on sexual practices and even conceptions, thereby freeing space for the emergence of other, sometimes very different, sexual cultures.

Sexual culture, in itself, is a fascinating concept. But something more fascinating is the diversity of sexual cultures. There are many sexual cultures. Sometimes, even a single sexual culture may be pluralised by virtue of the varying or different ways individuals choose to appropriate that culture. The ensuing diversity, though fascinating, is often fraught with complications. In the midst of diversity, simple easy-cut responses and approaches are rendered problematic, ineffective and, at best, insensitive. There is a need therefore for a critical reflection on the diversity of sexual cultures particularly by the multiple stakeholders involved in sex and sexuality education.

The need for culturally sensitive sexuality education in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country with over 180 million people. It is a country 'in which racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural divisions are so severe that they require special arrangements to be mutually accommodating in an ambivalent form of unity in diversity' (Deng 1996, 50). For some writers, Nigeria is a protesting sphere of agglutinates and cultures meshed together. Nigeria's diversity has never been contested; it has an abundance of different kinds of cultural differentiations of 'ethnic, race, religion, caste and region' as articulated by Young (1976, 47, 48). It is a country that is highly pluralised, particularly in terms of the cultures of its peoples. The fact that Nigeria is outshone only by Papua New Guinea and Indonesia for multilingualism, concentrating within her borders 516 (7.47) per cent of the world's spoken languages (Vistawide 2004), provides testimony to Nigeria's plurality. There is even one community, the Ubang of south-east Nigeria, where 'men and women speak in different tongues' (Nzama 2013).

This diversity is an important factor influencing Nigeria's educational policy. Given the country's diversity, the ideal of inclusiveness has been promoted as a guide for the policy and practice of education (Okoroma 2006; Imam 2012). Beyond the policy articulations of Nigeria's educational system, the reality of the educational sector in Nigeria is such that the contents of instruction, curriculum, pedagogical culture, teachers, students and the various geographical contexts of the academic institutions reflect diversity and the need for inclusiveness. The frequent occurrence of intermarriage and the free movement of peoples within Nigeria have ensured that almost all schools in the country, no matter where they are located, contain students from different places. For example, a typical secondary school, whether it is situated in Delta State in the southern part of Nigeria or in Borno state in the northern part of the country, cannot be shielded from the cultural diversity surrounding it. Even if per chance, it can escape the impact of Nigeria's varying tribal and religious convictions within the state, it will be under the influence of students, teachers and school administrators from different ethnic, racial, religious and regional backgrounds.

Sexuality education in Nigeria is positioned within this diversity, which offers a context in which it is very difficult to pinpoint exact norms, clear objectives and specific guidelines. This is because there are varying attitudes towards sexuality education itself; heterogeneous groups and camps with diverse expectations advocate for different objectives. This is in addition to varying religious and cultural configurations of the essence, meaning and place of sex, sexuality, taboos and sins, among other things. Even the profoundly unequal economic structure of the country influences the way in which sex is practised and viewed. All of these things turn sexuality education into a very controversial issue, affecting the sensibilities of all and sundry in quite different ways such that there is almost a conflict-ridden atmosphere in which 'interactive groups perceive their identities and interests as incompatible' (Deng 1996, 49).

In a typical classroom context, there will be students from all parts of Nigeria. Some come from cultural contexts or traditions in which monogamy is the norm; others from cultural settings where polygamy is construed as an indicator of high socio-economic status. Some will be from regional and cultural groups that uphold the practice of child marriage, forced marriage and even domestic abuse, while others are from cultural groups that emphatically reject these. There will be students and even teachers from backgrounds where public discussion of sexuality or the use of sexual terms is taboo and there will be others from

backgrounds that hold little or no reservation against discussing sex in the public domain. Thus, a typical classroom is already a setting of different beliefs about sexuality and differing gender configurations.

Specific examples of courtship and marriage can illustrate this diversity of sexual cultures in Nigeria. Some cultures tend to promote a lack of courtship and instead encourage formal betrothal or even child marriage. Others set clear rules about the sexual practices allowed during courtship (Mukoro 2015). Customarily, while the Fulanis in northern Nigeria whip the soon-to-be-groom to test his resilience as a man, the Efiks in southern Nigeria send their soon-to-be-brides to fattening houses so that they can attain the kind of physique desired by the soon-to-be-groom. While cousin marriages may be allowed by the Fulanis, these are considered as taboo and incestuous by the Isokos of southern Nigeria. While the Hausa in the north may practise dowry payment in combination with bridewealth, the Urhobos in the south normally stick to bridewealth alone.

The objects used for the celebration of marriage also differ. Although the use of items such as Kola nuts and drinks in marriage ceremonies is widespread, there are discernible differences in how these are used. Furthermore, the gradual acceptance of Western culture has further created variants among people of the same tribe. While some customs are eroded, newer combinations are created. Western technologies such as amplifiers and electronic devices are combined with traditional nuptial theatrics in marriage ceremonies. Dress styles, fashion, the expected roles of participants and the required objects for marriage ceremonies and their formalisation continue to change within the various customs. Furthermore, in addition to the roles that are played by both established and newer religious denominations and groups, there are sometimes points of conflict between Western and traditional Nigerian cultures with respect to marriage. One clear pointer of this is that couples are normally expected to receive both traditional and religious formalisation, or even more, for their marriage. For example, a Christian couple ought to marry in the church, in the bride's village and in the court of law for the marriage to have religious, traditional and state recognition (Terian 2004; Sylvester 2010; Ubong 2010).

When Nigerian educators try to introduce sexuality education into the curriculum by teaching parts of it in biology or civics classes, or by presenting it as a part of a health education provision in response to the high rate of sexually transmitted infections, an unresolved question is exposed. Even when they choose to leave sex education out of the school curriculum altogether, and sometimes invite outside experts in health and psychology to give transient seminars on sex to the students, the question remains. This question is also there when efforts are made to adapt materials or provide appropriate sexuality education resources for specific groups or even when policy planners try to create a nationwide curriculum or guidelines for sexuality education, while simultaneously avoiding the fault lines of cultural exclusion, marginalisation or simply ineffective programmes. This question is not about the positive impacts of sex education, since this has been amply demonstrated in many studies (Rajani and Starkman 2002; Kirby 2007; Inyang and Inyang 2013; Sule 2015). It concerns how best to frame sexuality education and teach it in view of the diversity of sexual cultures that exist in Nigerian society, and how to have a sexuality education programme that is responsive within this context of diversity. This cultural problematic is fundamental to sexuality education in any culturally diverse society, but especially so in Nigeria.

The Family Life and HIV Education Programme

Since the 1990s, Nigeria has experienced a huge rise in the spread of HIV, particularly among the youthful population. In response to this situation, the Federal Ministry of Education, in close collaboration with several national and international organisations such as the International Women's Health Coalition, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the World Bank and Action Health Incorporated decided to introduce a form of sexuality education into Nigerian schools from the upper primary to the secondary level (Isiugo-Abanihe et al. 2014). After years of an 'inclusive and participatory' collaboration between relevant stake-holders across various diverse groups, 'in August 2001, the "National Sexuality Education Curriculum for Upper Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Institutions" was approved' (Samuels 2012, 7). Even though the development of the curriculum was undertaken through an inclusive process which showed an awareness of Nigeria's cultural diversity, it received fierce criticism and opposition from some quarters. For example, one Nigerian newspaper columnist reacted to the Federal Ministry of Education's decision to initiate sex education in schools with the following words:

> A newfangled and potentially controversial sexuality education curriculum for upper primary schools, junior secondary schools, and senior secondary schools is being proposed by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council … A draft copy of the curriculum *Weekly Trust* is in possession of contains significant portions that fester with the pus of reckless moral indiscretion which can outrage the sensibilities of parents, teachers, moralists of all shades, and provoke widespread disapproval and condemnation. (Kperogi 2002)

The columnist's reference to 'reckless moral indiscretion', the 'sensibilities of parents, teachers, moralists' and the possibility of sexuality education being able to 'provoke widespread disapproval and condemnation' demonstrates a kind of countercultural response to sexuality education in schools. It is a stance that could be rephrased as follows: 'My culture does not allow it, so it should be rejected or at least to it should be made conform to my own culture. Otherwise, my sensibility can be outraged'. Even the choice of the word 'newfangled' just before the words 'potentially controversial' betrays a cultural outlook on sexuality education or at least a view that portrays sexuality education as something foreign to one's culture.

From the process of policy formulation in 1999 to its implementation in 2003, the move to establish sex education in Nigerian primary and secondary schools encountered opposition from various quarters, most of which were motivated by culture. This is because, as clearly articulated by Huaynoca et al.,

> Sexuality education is often perceived as incompatible with prevailing traditional societies' values and norms. In Nigeria, as in most countries, there are many groups, including those genuinely concerned about the well-being of adolescents, who strongly oppose sexuality education as not being in the best interest of adolescents. (2014, 198)

These cultural roadblocks continue to spell difficulties for sexuality education in Nigerian schools. For example, in 2002, the name of the curriculum was changed to Family Life and HIV Education 'due to conservative political–religious pressure' (Huaynoca et al. 2014, 202). In Sokoto state, for similar reasons, the curriculum was called the School Health Education Programme (Huaynoca et al. 2014). Furthermore, in some contexts the curriculum ended up as 'an abstinence-only curriculum that omits information about contraception and condoms' (Wood and Rogow 2015, 3). Issues of sexual diversity and masturbation were noticeably left out, in addition to the provision that allows the various states' ministries of education to modify the curriculum in line with their local cultural context. Furthermore,

The content was then integrated into science and social studies curricula for upper primary (grades 3-6), junior secondary (grades 7-9), and senior secondary school levels (grades 10-12). The decision was made, however, to focus first on junior secondary schools, when students are still forming their attitudes towards sexuality and gender and before most are sexually active. (Wood and Rogow 2015, 12)

Types of culturally sensitive sexuality education in Nigeria

The term 'culturally sensitive sexuality education' is used by Ward and Taylor (1991, 62) to argue for a form of sexuality education that is responsive to culture. Drawing from the wider field of the sociology of education and interrelated studies of education and cultural diversity, I will now articulate three possible stances that sexuality education could assume in view of the diversity of sexual cultures in Nigeria. These are what might be described as monocultural, multicultural and intercultural forms.

Monocultural stance on sex education

Simultaneously describing and critiquing monocultural education are the following words from Ward and Taylor.

The programs currently in place in most schools are ethnocentric and culturally biased, and they almost always assume a heterosexual audience. The lack of attention paid to differences has served to silence, dismiss, or denigrate the concerns and life experiences of large groups of minority adolescents. Furthermore, differences within minority population have been ignored. (Ward and Taylor 1991, 62)

In a monocultural sex education setting, the contents, approach and even expected outcomes are defined by a single sexual culture, even if this 'involves students of one cultural background learning the mores and values of another single culture' (Rinker 2011, 20). The Family Life and HIV Education curriculum adopts a monocultural stance. This is because it sets itself as a curriculum that promotes abstinence only as the solution to the HIV epidemic, through the decision to leave out discussion of condoms (NERDC (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council) 2003). The issue here is not with abstinence itself but rather the refusal to present other options such as safe sex, alongside their strengths or limitations. A downside to an abstinence-only form of sexuality education is that sex can be twisted in a moralistic or religious light as something negative in itself. In such an educational setting, views about sex and sexuality are rooted and expressed within the terms of a single faith culture. For example, pre-marital and extra-marital sexual affairs are unconditionally seen as sinful and immoral. When educational institutions or policy-makers adamantly refused to permit sexuality education in schools, it can be because of a monocultural stance, particularly when their arguments are based on the values of a culture of silence about sexuality, especially in regard to children.

In relation to sexuality education, the sociopolitical sphere in Nigeria comprises both conservatives or traditionalists and liberals. The former are more likely to be opposed to any kind of sexuality education for children and young people. The latter are more likely to possess a more open attitude to sexuality and sex education. Those who argue that sexuality must be left completely to the whims of free and consenting adults often describe their position as more open with respect to a closed traditional outlook on sexuality, in which

sexuality is strictly regulated by the traditional norms of marriage and other community values. Both conservative and liberal camps can be said to be monocultural, however when they seem to hold a strong or even extreme opinion that a good form of sexuality education ought to be designed solely in line or in accordance with their conservative or liberal values. So, whatever guise is assumed, a monocultural stance on sexuality education runs on the principle of singularity, univocally expressing to and forming the students within the boundaries of just one sexual culture, be this traditional or more liberal in its character.

One good feature of a monocultural stance on sexuality education is its pedagogical simplicity. This is because it is often easier to assemble a curriculum on sexuality education from the worldview of just one sexual culture and communicate this as a single truth. This is simple because the focus is one just one sexual culture rather than a multiplicity of sexual cultures. This is because engaging with a multiplicity of cultures brings with it extra difficulties such as how to deal completely different and conflicting sexual cultures that are completely different and even conflicting.

This strength of a monocultural stance on sexuality education (simplicity as a result of a single worldview) also has weaknesses. Since a monocultural stance is culturally sensitive to just one type of sexual culture, it runs the risk of raising students, and later adults, who are totally unprepared to engage with those with different sexual cultures in a respectful and sensitive way. The danger is not in the awareness of one's sexual culture but in the ignorance that one's own sexual culture is but one of several. This can extend beyond just accepting and living within one sexual culture to an extreme aversion towards those of other sexual cultures which prevents people from engaging with them in a humane and respectful way. The danger here is in holding extreme positions that interpret a willingness to understand and respect those of another sexual culture, even if it this is a critical engagement, as an unacceptable endorsement of these cultures.

Multicultural stance on sex education

A multicultural stance aspires for more enriched 'comprehensive and less distorted understandings' (Harding 1998, 344). This aspiration is promoted through the incorporation of multiple worldviews such that the exclusion of cultures is avoided within the learning settings and everyone, despite their differences, can wilfully participate and count within the educational system (Banks 2009; Nieto 2013). Thus, a multicultural stance on sex education will aspire to be as inclusive as possible, so that almost all sexual cultures can have a voice. According to Erickson, this involves 'teaching about the cultural practices of other people without stereotyping or misinterpreting them and teaching about one's own cultural practices without invidiously characterising the practices of other people' (2001, 44).

Regarding inclusiveness, a multicultural stance on education is one step further than a monocultural position. In view of the cultural diversity of Nigeria, a multicultural stance on sexuality education holds some promise because of its attempts to align itself to meet the demands of a diverse and multicultural society (Lynch 1983). A multicultural stance will likely try to include reference to several sexual cultures within the curriculum. Inclusiveness is a praiseworthy ideal because it can counter the feelings of marginalisation felt by cultural groups who are left out of the curriculum or sexuality education. Yet, a weakness with a multicultural stance derives from the very idea of inclusiveness. In a country with fewer cultures, the ideal could be translated into practice but, in a country with over five hundred

cultures and many sexual cultures, this is almost impossible. As such, the resulting curriculum on sex education is likely to be so bulky that comprehensive coverage of it in a classroom setting will leave no room for the coverage of other important subjects such mathematics, languages, sciences and the arts.

The second problem with a multicultural stance on sexuality education lies in its pretence to representation, or the idea that a culture can, in fact, be represented. Earlier, I mentioned the dynamic nature of culture. This dynamism ensures that culture is always fluid and actively assumes various forms. A good metaphor for this is the racehorse. On the one hand, the horse can be recognised as a horse, its figure stays pretty much the same. Yet, on the other hand, the horse is racing. There is the dynamism. The location, the posture, the height, the expressions and the energy levels all change throughout the race. In fact, even the horse itself can be changed by the race. So also is culture. Thus, there is the danger of capturing a moment or two, or several aspects of a culture, and presenting these as depictions or representations of such a culture divorced from context and frozen in time.

For this reason, another danger to multicultural education lies in its superficiality, which according to Nieto (2009, 90) ends up in doing 'little more than reinforce stereotypes about marginalised groups by focusing solely on such matters as food, music and holidays' without influencing real institutional changes or even confronting the institutional issues that are relevant to multiculturalism. Thus, while a monocultural stance on sexuality education offers a kind of pedagogical simplicity, which could lead to extremism, a multicultural stance on sex education presents a type of pedagogical complexity that may lead to superficiality. This superficiality can be likened to trying all but mastering none. In other words, the student can only hope to learn a few things about all sexual cultures (if this is even possible), with no in-depth knowledge gained about their own sexual culture or even a single sexual culture for that matter.

Intercultural stance on sex education

An intercultural stance on sexual cultures and sexuality education carries with it the intercultural attributes of being fluid (in the sense that there is a fluidity of identity), liberal and relativist (Meer and Modood 2011). An example of this fluidity of culture is the 'enormous shift in patterns of self-identity' due to several factors such as intermarriage and socio-economic migration across hitherto well-defined cultural borders (Cantle 2014, 314). Thus, in this a highly interconnected world, 'a surprising number of people are thinking of themselves in more complex terms … that people can have more than one identity at the same time and that these are not necessarily in opposition to each other; rather, they simply represent different aspects of human relations' (Cantle 2014, 315, 316). For example, a child born to parents from two different cultural groups such the Yoruba or Hausa tribes, or from Christian or Moslem religious groups, is likely to have opportunities to assume a more fluid identity.

Secondly, there is the assumption here that each person, rather than being subsumed within a group identity, has an individual identity. That identity can be chosen and developed by the individual (Cantle 2012) and is not a compulsory tag which the individual must wear because of his cultural origin (Zapata-Barrero 2013). The liberal idea of culture gives weight to a person's individual will and consent. Here, for example, there can be rejection of sexual labels, such as homosexuality or heterosexuality. An individual can situate themselves along

a spectrum or change their sexual desire or orientation rather than feel imprisoned within just one label.

Akin to an intercultural stance is the idea of cultural relativism. In a certain sense, all sexual cultures are approached and presented in such a way that they seem equal to each other. None is judged higher or lower than another. This fluidity, liberalism and relativism add up to an essential aspect of the intercultural stance, which is the idea of cultural exchange, circulation, revision and evolution through discourse and communication (Sze and Powell 2004; Meer and Modood 2011). In an intercultural educational setting, cultures are expected to learn from each other, thereby creating more opportunities for intercultural enrichment (Sandercock 2009).

Although ideas of communication and cultural exchanges may be attractive to the agenda of cohesiveness within a nation of highly diverse and numerous cultures, how and what those from polygamous sex cultures will learn, and what they will exchange with those from monogamous sex cultures is a difficult question worth answering by proponents of the intercultural stance on sex education. This question is not my main concern here, as what concerns me more is the idea of cultural relativism implicit in the intercultural stance.

There are dangers within this idea of cultural relativism. It is like telling children that all sexual cultures are permissible. While this may counter the implicit in the monocultural stance on sexuality education, it could lead to a certain nihilism or the annihilation of cultural values, even the very good ones of respect and consent. There are practices such as rape, forced marriage and sex trafficking that most will frown at, even if in some sex cultures they are defensible. Yet, in the nihilism founded on cultural relativism, these bad practices could surprisingly hold some power. For this reason, I am hesitant to propose an intercultural stance as the way forwards for sex education in a culturally diverse society such as Nigeria. My concern is linked to the fact that this stance will likely meet fierce opposition – even perhaps more than a monocultural stance on sex education – from both traditionalists and liberals. Is there a paradox in an intercultural stance to sexuality education? In an attempt to be sensitive to all sexual cultures, it becomes insensitive to each and every sexual culture?

An open-cultural stance on sex education

There is a hidden drive towards closure in sexuality education in each of the three previously mentioned positions. In other words, there is a push towards the resolution of the problematic nature of diversity either through shutting out the different (monocultural stance), by incorporating other cultures and countering stereotypes (multicultural stance) or by assuming a relativist and dynamic receptivity towards other sexual cultures (intercultural stance). In the light of these difficulties, what may be needed is what might be described as an open-cultural stance towards sex education. An open-cultural stance, rather than trying to resolve (by the provision of some framework or principle), the difficulties or complexities associated with the diversity of sexual cultures, takes another approach. This is an open-ended stance towards the diversity of sexual cultures.

Realising that culture or cultural differences is not something that can be easily manipulated into a solvable framework, an open-cultural approach to sex education is one that sensitises students to conflicts, exposes them, then teaches about them, rather than obfuscates them. This is because education or even sexuality education is not a thing of itself; it is, as Whitehead and several other experientialists will argue, a preparation for the real world

(Mukoro 2014). It engenders a real world of difference and conflicts, particularly among cultures. Rather than teaching through a curriculum that attempts to resolve these differences for learners, students are better prepared for the real world if they are introduced to conflict and given the competence to live, navigate and thrive within it. That way, they may be empowered to live with multiple, often conflicting, sexual cultures because such multiplicity and conflicts will always be there. This is the logic behind an open-cultural stance on sexuality education.

How then should learners be empowered? One approach is through a sexuality education that helps to cultivate and develop what we might call sex cultural intelligence. Intelligence, as used here, can be replaced by the words 'sensitivity' and 'finesse'. The several challenges faced by the previous models highlight the need for sex cultural intelligence. Rather than providing an overarching definition of sex cultural intelligence, I will outline some broad features of a sex culturally intelligent person. This is helpful if we keep in mind that a good feature of the open-cultural stance on sex education is that it sets a premium on the development and cultivation of sex cultural intelligence.

A sex cultural intelligent person will not make a claim about transcending culture. He or she realises that one always operates within a culture or some subsets of culture, and recognises that there will be cultural biases rooted in or stemming from one's cultural outlook on sex. This realisation empowers the person to be able to question different sexual cultures and their corresponding logics, which he or she might otherwise have accepted as a truths or matters of fact.

A person with a highly developed sex cultural intelligence understands that culture is much more complex than what is normally presented. Even a single culture, due to cultural dynamism, can contain elements of which he or she is not yet aware. This awareness will prompt the sex cultural intelligent person to learn more about a culture rather than making hasty conclusions based on stereotypes.

A person with a highly developed sex cultural intelligence, while being sufficiently aware of his or her own sexual culture(s), and with an understanding of associated biases, logic and presuppositions, is able to keep an open mind about other sex cultures. This person is able to differentiate this openness, which is a willingness to further understand and learn more about other sexual cultures through dialogue, education and respectful communication, from an endorsement or incorporation of these cultures.

Undoubtedly, a developed sense of curiosity will be an important attribute of the person with a highly developed sex cultural intelligence. This allows them to further pursue their education through questioning and interacting with different people, rather than a simple defensive attitude of closure to anything outside the curriculum.

Some good features of the sex cultural intelligent person is that she or he is able to hold values without being an extremist. He or she is able to critically engage in his or her own and others' sexual cultures without being easily influenced, even learning one or more good things from the process. For example, a rural Nigerian family that has recently moved to Europe might at first be shocked by public displays of affection between couples. This is because, in many parts of Africa, sexuality and displays of affection are private matters. Rather than just dismissing such public displays as perverse behaviours or simply copying them, the family members might critically engage with this new sexual culture. They might investigate the benefits and good sides of this new culture and even incorporate some elements of it into their own without losing their own cultural orientation on sex and sexuality.

Another positive side to this more open-cultural stance towards sexuality education is that it could take on the strengths of the three previously considered stances without necessarily assuming their weaknesses. How is this possible? This is because in practice the boundaries between monocultural, multicultural and intercultural education are often conflated (Byram and Zarate 1995; Coleman 1998; Shaules 2007; Arenas, Reyes, and Wyman 2010; Strong 2011). For instance, a student educated under a supposed multicultural model can end up incorporating monocultural or intercultural values into their repertoire, or even a resistance to diversity. The knowledge that these models interact with one another should inspire us to think beyond the imprisoning restrictions of each of these stances. Accordingly, that there will be elements of monocultural, multicultural and transcultural stances available in an open-cultural stance to sexuality education.

In practice, how can an open-cultural stance on sexuality education incorporate elements from each of the three previously considered approaches to sexuality education without losing its identity as an open-cultural stance? A good way to think about this is to use each of the three previously considered as steps in a ladder for sexuality education in practice.

Step one: the monocultural step

The student could first be introduced to one sexual culture. Unlike the simple monocultural stance on sex education, the sexual culture focused upon will be used only as an example of what a sexual culture really is. The key pedagogical strategy here is *not* one of indoctrination. It is not even the negative portrayal of alternative or different sexual cultures. The key pedagogical strategy is simply an illustration. Students are only introduced to a sexual culture, for the sake of illustration, as a beginning point. This is the monocultural step. The logic of this step is that all learners need a basis from which to ascend when dealing with complexity or attempting mastery.

Step two: the multicultural step

In the second multicultural step of towards cultivating an open-cultural stance on sexuality education, students are introduced to difference. This difference can exist in various shades and forms. It can begin by very small alterations to the supposed 'norm' but can end in complete polarity reversal. The rationale behind the gradual introduction of difference is that it enables students to differentiate difference from conflict. A major attribute of extremism is often the equating of difference with conflict, where any slight difference is seen as a conflict that must be silenced or attacked.

Furthermore, there should not be a finality to the difference(s) that the students are introduced to. Teachers should not assume that they are offering a comprehensive account of all sexual cultures. This is impossible. Students should be introduced to sexual cultures in the same way they will be introduced to the different kinds of food. Even when they know what food is, there are numerous other kinds of food, whereby they cannot pretend to have acquired a finality on knowledge of different kinds of food. There should be an awareness of the kinds of food they know, but that there are kinds of food that still remain unknown.

Step three: the intercultural step

At this stage, students are introduced to the dynamism of sexual culture(s). They are taken beyond the simplicity of sexual labels or definite portrayals of sexual cultures to something more open-ended. They are taught to respectfully communicate aspects of their sexual

cultures, orientations and preferences to others who may disagree with them. They are provided with the skills to engage in dialogue and negotiate their sexuality within a world of different sexual cultures. Most importantly, they are taught to see the individual, not just as a determinate cell within a larger sexual cultural group, but also as someone who can define their sexuality and who continues to learn about it, even within the mainstream sexual cultures.

Final step: the open-cultural floor

At this stage, the student will hopefully understand what a sexual culture is. They can identify their own sexual culture and recognise that there are different types. They will know how to hold their own within this terrain of plural cultures and be able to communicate respectfully and critically engage their own sexual cultures and those of others. In a sense, by cultivating sex cultural intelligence, they are able to live and thrive in a world of plural sexual cultures and plural modes of sexual expression.

Conclusions

Sexuality education is a controversial field. Undeniably, culture, and by extension sexual cultures, continue to fan this controversy. While different sexual cultures can provide the raw data for sexuality education, they can also paralyse the possibility of good quality sexuality education in any one society. These controversial aspects of sexuality education are heightened in a highly pluralised nation such as Nigeria with its various sex cultures. Even with the existence of a formal curriculum for sexuality education, cultural barriers and limitations persist and will continue to exist until these questions of culture are seriously addressed. Even though the positive aspects of sexuality education in schools (Inyang and Inyang 2013; Konwea and Inyang 2015; Sule 2015) are well documented, cultural differences and positions remain barriers. These cultural barriers, which assume ascendancy over scientific data, cannot be overcome by mere scientific evidence but by a sensitive response. This is what this article hopes to provide through a critically engagement in the various ways in which this can be done.

The articulation of sexual cultures in this paper suggests that sexuality education is something beyond just a response to a situation such as the HIV epidemic. It is probable that the high emphasis placed on HIV by the creators of the Nigerian Family Life and HIV Education curriculum aimed to tame some of the controversy and opposition to sexuality education. Yet, this approach has its weaknesses. It could reduce sexuality education only to a response to the HIV epidemic and diminish the important place of sexuality in human culture. Sexuality education is better developed as a form of cultural education about sexuality. Such an approach broadens its scope, allows for a critique and even transforms some of the negative aspects of the cultures in Nigeria that devalue women, downplay masculine responsibility in child-rearing and promote prejudice against children through a culture of silence on sexuality. A good start may lie in the renaming of the curriculum as Family and Sexual Cultures in Nigeria. This more open-cultural approach towards sexuality education will not only be helpful to teachers, curriculum designers and policy planners. It will also be helpful to religious leaders, the media and other shapers of thought who have continually to confront cultural barriers in their efforts to promote any discourse about sex, sexuality, sexual cultures and sex and relationships education.

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