Assessing Comprehensive Sexuality Education

A Visualisation Tool

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Introduction to the comprehensive sexuality education visualisation tool

This tool scores different dimensions of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programs and creates a visual image of this score. The tool has been developed with a number of aims in mind, including i) facilitating an evaluation of CSE programs, ii) facilitating (multi-) stakeholder discussions on a particular CSE program with a view to improving understanding between stakeholders, which can lead to iii) facilitating improvements in existing CSE programs through multi-stakeholder engagement.

The tool has been developed based on an extensive literature review of academic articles and program documentation related to CSE programs[1], as well as fieldwork conducted by researchers from the University of Amsterdam on CSE programs[2]. The checklist developed aims to incorporate the aspects of CSE that have shown to be most important through this review and research. The format of the tool is based on the Girls QUAT tool developed by International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI)[3].

How to use the tool

Below you will find a scoring sheet with six dimensions. Under each dimension there are seven statements to be scored. 1 point should be awarded if the point is true and 0 points awarded if the point is false. If it is not possible to judge the statement completely true or completely false, or if you cannot reach a consensus on the point, you can allocate 0.5. You then add up the scores for each dimension. These scores will be inserted into the visualisation tool, connecting the points to develop a visual image. The below section provides suggestions for how you can use this tool with various stakeholders.

Suggestions for using the CSE visualisation tool with different stakeholders

This tool can be used as a way of evaluating CSE programs, but is also useful for discussing the development and implementation of programs. The tool works best when it is used in conversation with multiple stakeholders, for example, school staff, students, members from the broader community and, where relevant, civil society representatives working on CSE in the community. When conducting multi-stakeholder discussions, it is critical that all those taking part feel comfortable in speaking out about their views and experiences.

Please note that a number of questions that can be used as a starting point for a dialogue between stakeholders are included in this document (below the diagram).

Using the tool with CSE and school staff

With staff who implement the CSE program, the advised way of using the tool is sitting down in a group and discussing each of the points on the checklist to develop a score together. It may be that you are able to find consensus on whether you believe a point is included in the program or not, or you may disagree. If managed well, this process in itself can thus already be eye-opening and result in productive discussions that improve understanding between groups and can contribute to

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[1] Hague, F., Miedema, E.A.J., and Le Mat, M.L.J. (2017) "Understanding the 'Comprehensive' in Comprehensive Sexuality Education. A literature Review." Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam

[2] Miedema, Esther A.J., Le Mat, Marielle L.J., & Amentie, Siyane A. (2017). "Moulding the sexuality education teacher: an analysis of comprehensive sexuality education in Ethiopia". University of Amsterdam

[3] ICDI (2012) "GIRLS-QUAT" Quality Assessment Tool of Services for Girls and Young Women". International Child Development Initiatives.

improving the program. An alternative is to score the categories individually (by giving each staff member a form to fill in) and then collecting these and using the comparison between different scores as a starting point for discussions.

Using the tool with young people

As young people are the primary users and target group of CSE programs, it is strongly advised to seek their input on the program. In this way, you can develop better understanding on whether the education that you believe you are delivering is really what young people feel they are receiving. There are a number of ways that you can use this tool with young people, the best approach will depend on how comfortable young people are to openly and critically discuss the program with their peers or those running the program. The more comfortable the young people are, the more honest their answers will be, and therefore the more useful the answers can be in further developing the program.

Option 1 – Young people are a part of the discussion with school staff

If young people are comfortable being open and critical in front of those who run the program, one option is that the discussion with staff and young people can be held altogether – and therefore the scoring can be done by discussing and developing consensus (if possible) on each of the points. If this option is taken, it is crucial that young people are given the space and freedom to contribute to the discussion and that their opinions will be listened to and respected, especially if they voice opinions that differ from those voiced by the adults that are present.

Option 2 – Young people have their own discussion

A second option is that you share the tool with young people, and ask for them to sit together in a group and discuss each of the points on the checklist and develop a score together – they can then share the final scores with you (and if possible a short report on how the discussion went – for example, if there were any points of disagreement and if so, the reasons for these disagreements). You can compare these scores with those developed by CSE program managers and staff to see where there is consensus and where there is not between the young people accessing the program and those running it. This process will be useful in itself, but if it is then possible to have a discussion between young people and staff, it is likely that even more will be learnt which can support further development of the program and could result in increased understanding between the groups.

Option 3 – Young people score individually

A final option is that young people are given the scoring sheet and visualisation tool and fill this out individually; these can then be collected and compared with each other – possibly developing an average score for each dimension – and then compared with the score(s) developed by staff. Again, this input will prove even more useful if it is possible to have a discussion with young people, to better understand their points and opinions that lead to their scoring.

Using the tool with other stakeholders/the wider community

You may also find it useful to go beyond those directly involved with the program (staff and young people) to use the tool with other stakeholders or the wider community. The three options above provide examples of how this can be done.

Instructions

Please, look carefully at the seven statements in the six boxes or 'dimensions' below and score 1 point when the statement is true and applies to the program you are assessing, and 0 points if the statement is false and does not apply. Sometimes a straightforward 'yes' or 'no' cannot be given or it is not possible to come to an agreement on the answer. When this is the case, give the statement half a point (0.5). Add up the points on each checklist and enter the total score for each dimension in the total score box. These will then be inserted into the diagram below and the points connected to develop a visual image.

Scoring

1 = True
0 = False
0.5 = Unsure or no agreement

| CONTENT – SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH	TRUE/FALSE
The program provides information on STIs and HIV	
The program provides information on teenage pregnancy	
The program provides information on female genital cutting	
The program provides information on emotional wellbeing related to SRH	
The program provides information on contraception and does not take an abstinence-only approach	
The program addresses sensitive or taboo issues, including abortion	
The program dispels myths and misconceptions relating to sexual and reproductive health, such as HIV/AIDS	
TOTAL SCORE	

CONTENT – SEXUALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS	TRUE/FALSE
The program provides information on sexuality and sexual relationships.	
The program supports young people in understanding their own sexualities	
The program dispels myths and misconceptions relating to sexuality and sexual relationships	
The program supports young people to build healthy, equitable relationships (for example, discusses the importance of mutual respect in relationships)	
The program addresses pleasure and desire in relationships	
The program addresses the importance of consent in sexual relationships	
The program discusses gender-based violence	
TOTAL SCORE	

CONTENT – YOUTH RIGHTS: PARTICIPATION AND AGENCY	TRUE/FALSE
The program informs youth about sexual and reproductive health and rights	
The program addresses the fact that sexual and reproductive rights apply to all people, LGTBI, non-married youth, etc.	
The program supports young people in exercising their agency with regards to choice/decisions about their sexual and reproductive health	
The program fosters independent decision-making, based on critical thinking	
The program encourages young people to make their own informed choices regarding contraceptive use	
The program encourages young people to make their own choices regarding relationships	
The program strengthens youth led advocacy and political engagement, for example, in school or community councils	
TOTAL SCORE	

CONTENT – GENDER EQUALITY, POWER RELATIONS AND SOCIAL NORMS	TRUE/FALSE
The program critically discusses gender relations in society	
The program critically discusses the social norms which (negatively) impact women and girls, and boys and men	
The program addresses how gender norms and inequality affect the experience of sexuality	
The program addresses how gender norms and inequality affect the experience of sexual and reproductive health	
The program has an overarching aim of redressing damaging gender norms, including for boys and men	
The program seeks to empower women and girls in decision-making concerning their sexual and reproductive health	
The program normalises non-sexual relationships (friendships) between genders	
TOTAL SCORE	

INCLUSIVITY AND CONNECTEDNESS OF THE PROGRAM	TRUE/FALSE
The program includes the voices of young people in its formation	
The program reaches and is relevant to all groups including LGBT+ youth, non-binary groups	
The program reaches young people from all economic backgrounds, ethnicities and castes	
The program reaches and is accessible to young people from all educational backgrounds, including out-of-school youth	
All participants have access to the same information and discussions (for example, unmarried girls get access to information on contraception)	
Parents and the wider society are involved in, and informed about, the program, to encourage acceptance of young people's sexuality and dispel SRH myths	
The program is linked to SRHR services and informs youth on where and how to access such services	
TOTAL SCORE	

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND APPROACH	TRUE/FALSE
The program is based on the needs of youth	
The learning environment is safe and free from bullying, discrimination, harassment and violence	
Teachers/facilitators have received adequate training and are knowledgeable on SRHR	
Teachers/facilitators are open-minded and have a positive, non-judgmental attitude towards young people and young people's sexuality	
Teachers/facilitators are comfortable discussing sexuality and accept students as sexual beings	
The program avoids a protectionist and problem-based approach	
The program acknowledges (sexual) diversity and offers choice, rather than imposing one solution.	
TOTAL SCORE	

CSE Score
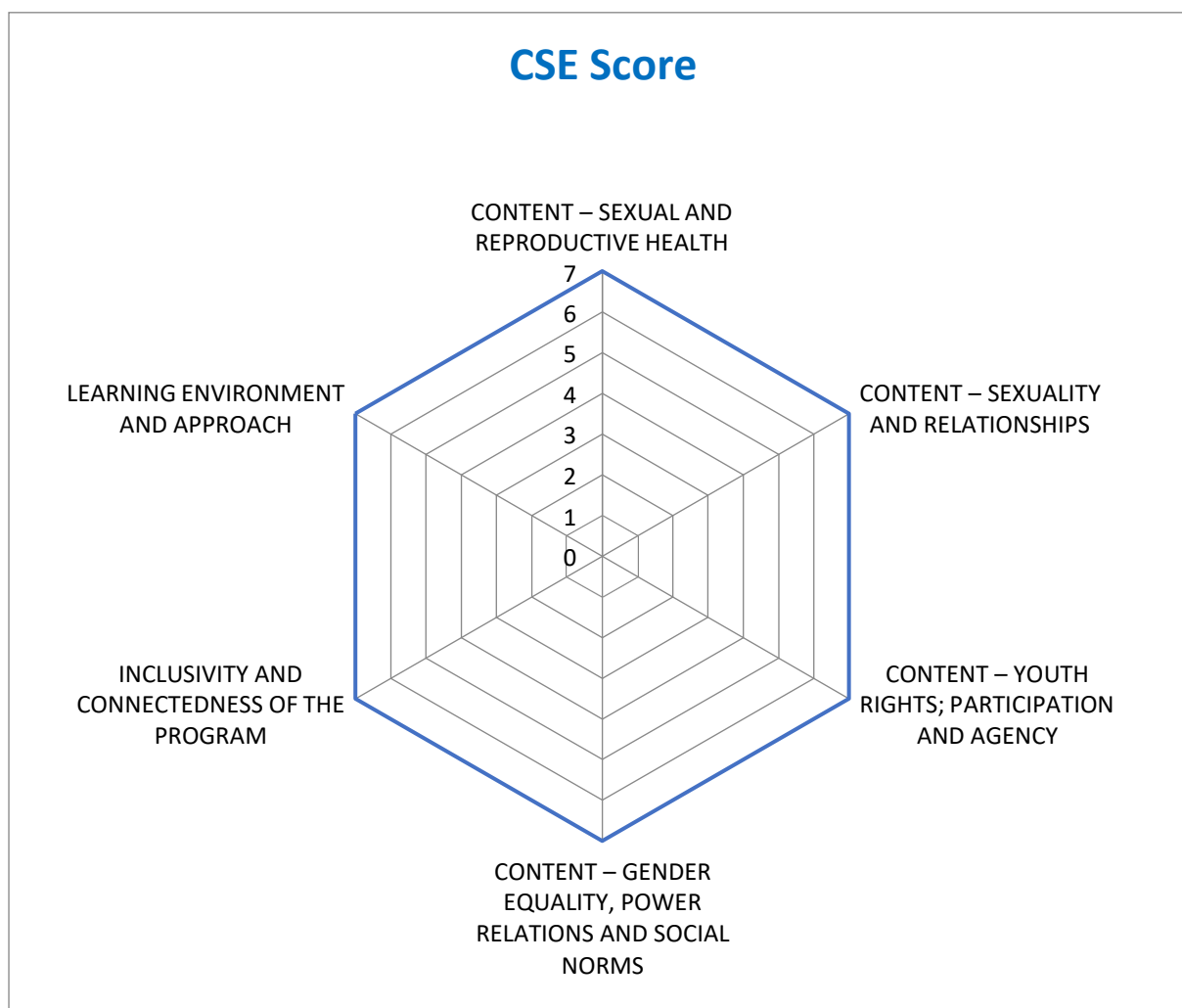
Discussion questions

The questions below provide guidance to develop a discussion on the visualisation tool and the process leading up to the final scores that have been inputted into the tool.

1. Were there categories that you felt were more important than others? Why?
2. Is there anything important that you felt the tool missed?
3. Where was there disagreement within the group on which score to give? What were the reasons for this disagreement?
4. Where was it easy to reach a consensus? Why was this the case?
5. On which points did the service not score well? What were the reasons for these lower scores? What improvements do you suggest should be made?
6. Based on your use of the evaluation tool, what next steps do you plan to take and who will take action to ensure these steps are taken (and when)?