

## Teaching for Gender and Sexual Diversity in South African Primary Schools

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**Abstract :** Children spend a substantial time at school, and their awareness and construction of sexual identities are significantly impacted by their teachers. South African primary schools locate sex and sexuality education in the Life Orientation (LO), leaving all engagement with issues of identity and diversity in the domain of LO teachers. This paper examines the views and experiences of selected teachers regarding their engagement with sexual diversity in a primary school in South Africa. This is a small-scale qualitative study. The sample comprised twelve teachers (including non-LO teachers), and the main research method was a semi-structured interview. The findings show that the teachers have limited understanding of sexual diversity. They mostly hold heteronormative and moralistic views, negate children's sexuality, and they are awkward about acknowledging and discussing diverse sexualities. We argue that teachers need to reflect on their own conservative socialisation and moral judgements, address their discomfort concerning addressing issues of sex and sexual diversity with children, and create an environment for children to construct their sexualities within a supportive context. Teacher Education must, therefore, prepare teachers in a manner that recognises the complex ways gender and sexuality infuse all aspects of learners' lives and prepare all teachers for a non-judgmental approach to sexual inclusion that challenges heteronormativity in primary school.

**Keywords :** primary school, sexuality education, sexual diversity, teachers

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