

Indigenous Knowledge-based pedagogies for teaching culturally taboo sexual concepts in isiXhosa speaking schools in South Africa

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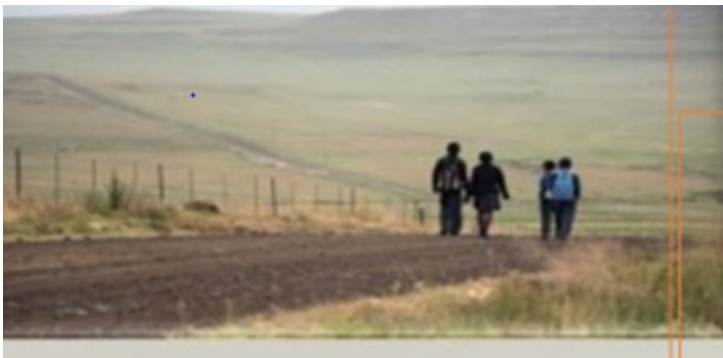
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Values underlying the Millenium declaration

- **Freedom and Equality:** No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development, equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.
- **Solidarity:** Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice.
- **Tolerance and harmony:** Respect for one another as human beings, taking into account all our diversity in culture, language and beliefs. Differences within and between societies should neither be feared nor repressed but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted.

The setting

- Secondary schools situated in deeply rural, remote rural villages in the Eastern Cape, South Africa
- Predominantly traditional thatched rondavels with no access to electricity/running water.
- Learners travelling long distances to school on foot.



What provoked this study on sexual concepts?

- An epistemic impasse (Lalu, 2008) of how Xhosa indigenous Knowledge (IK) can enable teachers working in rural-based schools to teach sexual concepts as mandated by the CAPS Grade 7 - 12 curriculum.
- A veil of secrecy, sexuality content remains invisible, silent and evokes discomfort across community members, schools and institutions of higher learning while the results of engaging in pervasive sexual acts are visible.
- Stereotypes and stigmas towards sexual concepts' talk (male and female genitalia, menstruation, sexual intercourse, fertilisation, circumcision) impact negatively on women (yes, all genders but emphasis is on women).

Methodology

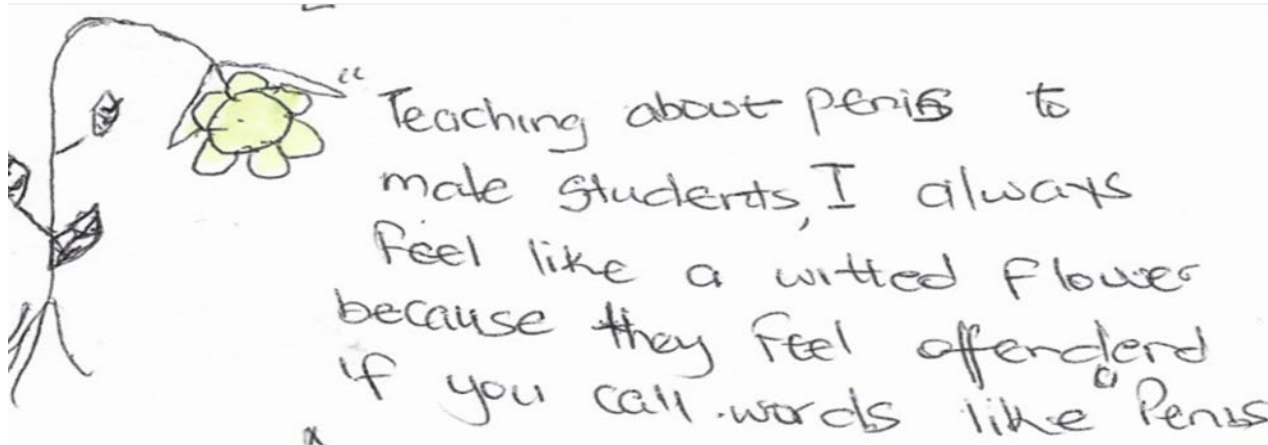
- A critical paradigm, addressing social justice issues of marginalised rural schoolteachers, including issues of power, dialogue and reflection (Carr & Kemmis, 2005; Freire, 2005; Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014).
- PALAR, qualitative data generated from 30 participants in cycle 1, 8 participants in second-fourth cycles teaching Life Sciences Grade 12.
- Focused on epistemological perspectives that are dominant in science knowledge acquisition (Creswell & Poth, 2016) and how pedagogies that resonate in IK can draw in the human aspect in abstract science.
- Embracing epistemic views of indigenous groupings in science because knowledge is subjective as it is embedded in culture (Taylor & Medina, 2011). In this case, in the language and context of the Xhosa teachers and community members residing in remote rural villages.

Use culturally accepted (IK) terms and cultural practices such as 'engceni'(on the grass) or 'exesheni' (on time) to illustrate menstrual cycle according to traditional teachings.

Link IK terms with western science concepts to teach the menstrual cycle as a means of breaking the cultural barrier depicted by *avoiding to name sexual concepts* due to cultural obedience.

Results: Data analysis in word cloud emerging from Atlas ti.8 software indicated that menstruation is the most culturally sensitive sexual concept to teach in Xhosa culture (Simayi, 2021)



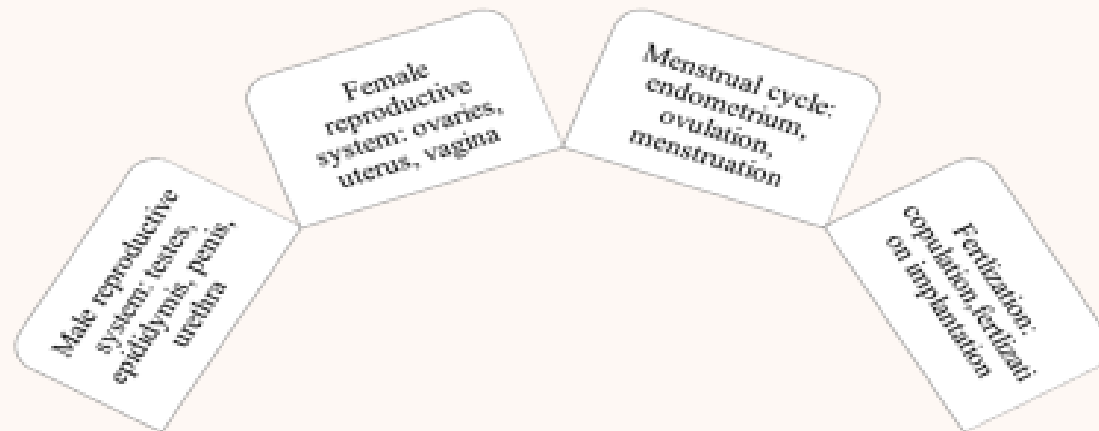


An example of a drawn response revealing a female teacher's feeling of fear and frustration when teaching about the penis to male learners of the same culture

Results:

Data analysis of individual drawings with descriptions of feelings about teaching sexual concepts

Teachers knew science sexual concepts prescribed in Grade 12 curriculum explicitly.



However, they could not teach effectively or clarify sexual concepts to learners due to angry parents who visit schools, rude learners of the male gender and feelings of embarrassment and loss of authority.

For example, fertilisation and sexual intercourse was defined as a similar concept though they are different due to embarrassment.

Human reproduction content covered during the Professional Development grounded on Contiguity Argumentation Theory as IK theory (curriculum content adapted from Department of Basic Education, 2017)

Using IK to teach sexual intercourse, fertilization and menstruation

Ukutsib'! ziko = jumping over the fireplace = sexual intercourse

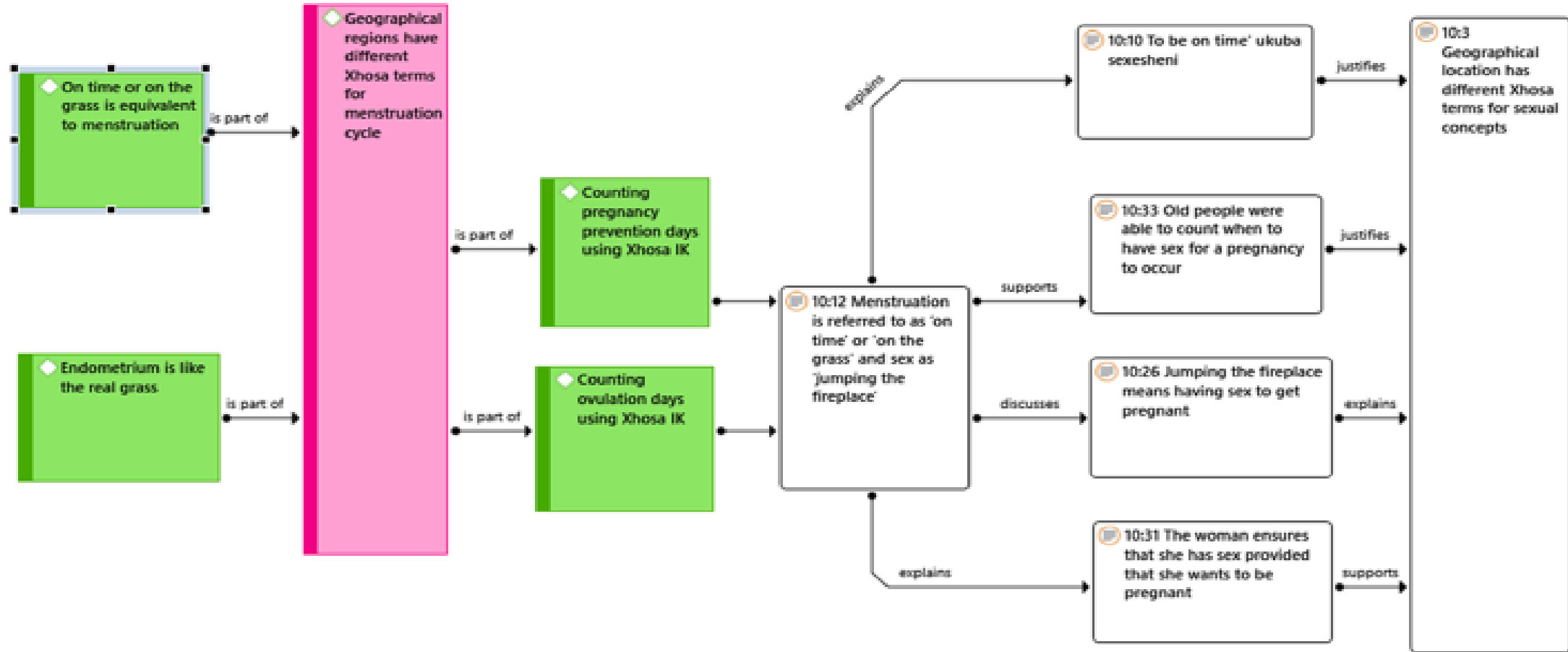
For fertilization to occur - Woman jumps over the fireplace.

So, when we are talking about menstruation, some geographical regions refer to menstrual cycle as being 'on the grass', meaning that dirty blood comes out for a certain number of days in preparation for something new that is going to be formed. [T: 00:00:45:00]. (Simayi, 2021).

Video transcript from a participant (extract from Simayi, 2021)

Indigenised Knowledge-based pedagogies such as *'engceni'* enable the naming of and effective teaching of culturally taboo sexual concepts such as the menstrual cycle





Atlas ti. 8 data analysis of statements confirming the use of Xhosa culture that is equivalent to the phases of the menstrual cycle (Extract from Simayi, 2021, p. 130)

Teaching models making a difference at Swartkops school

06/06/2023



Mandela University's Dr Ayanda Simayi, lecturer in the Faculty of Education, recently presented two teaching models as part of a community engagement project to empower learners to overcome cultural avoidance about menstruation and sexual education at Swartkops Primary School in Gqeberha on 29 May 2023.

The Indigenous Knowledge and ICT sexual concepts' community engagement project entails two models showing the female uterus, along with charts depicting male and female organs, fertilisation and embryo development inside the uterus to be used as teaching aids.

News continued.....

Dr Simayi initiated the project during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2022 to model School-Based-Learning (SBL) for her remote-learning third-year BEd science students, who were linked synchronously to her face-to-face presentations to Grade 7 learners.

The project is a continuation of Dr Simayi's PhD, which was funded by the CERMESA-DAAD scholarship in Germany. Dr Simayi presented the teaching material to the Swartkops Primary School Principal Cikizwa Kona-Mbilana and SGB (School Governing Body) chairperson Andile Gege and members, teachers and learners.

Mr Gege confirmed that sexual topics are sensitive and not talked about at home due to cultural inhibitions. Principal Kona-Mbilana said that although sexual topics form part of CAPS from Grade 7 to 9, these are not taught well due to cultural inhibitions. He commended the project as it connects school science concepts with relevant cultural knowledge, the naming of avoided sexual terms and creating greater opportunities for improved learner understanding.

What do Grade 7 learners say about the IK-ICT sexual concepts' teaching project at Swartkops Primary School?

Video

Masimamele, let us listen.