

https://dspace.org/

The value sexual health education in South Africa: a retrospective evaluation by recent matriculants

Blake, Casey

2016

http://hdl.handle.net/10539/21961

Blake, Casey (2016) The value sexual health education in South Africa: a retrospective evaluation by recent matriculants, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/21961>

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract

This research investigated how sex and sexuality is being represented within Sexual Health Education (SHE), as reported by students who completed matric in 2014. Furthermore, this study wanted to investigate how these representations contributed to the perceived value of the SHE. In South Africa, SHE is located within the curriculum of Life Orientation (LO), a compulsory subject through to Grade 12. Despite being compulsory, there is no external moderation for this subject, allowing schools and teachers to decide on the exact content being taught within LO. The theoretical framework of Social Representations Theory (SRT) guided this research. SRT states that our understanding of the world is based on a collection of social representations, accumulated through interactions with the social world. The school environment is a place where social representations are often challenged by new information covered in lessons, as well as in discussions with peers and teachers outside of class. This study was interested in what social representations are being re-presented in the context of SHE. Five focus group discussions were conducted, following a semi-structured interview schedule, informed by the literature review. The sample consisted of first year students at a Johannesburg university, who completed their secondary schooling in 2014. The findings of this study show that South African youth receive vastly different information, some of which is not complete or accurate. Participants felt their SHE failed to assist them in making adult decisions, as there was a sense that vital information was being withheld, and the information that was imparted within SHE was viewed as irrelevant. This was attributed to the societal taboo against speaking openly about topics of sex and sexuality, which was often perpetuated in the ways that sex and sexuality were socially represented within SHE.