

# Competencies of Sexuality Educators

A Guide to Identify and Support the Competencies of Sexuality Educators





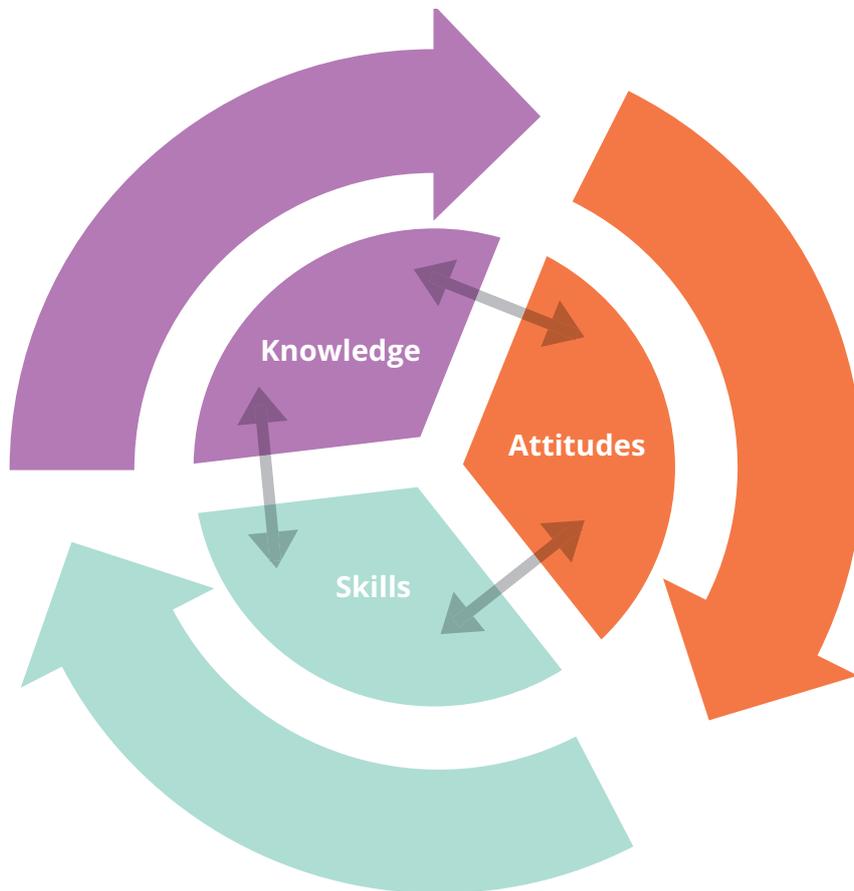
# Competencies of Sexuality Educators

The WHO (2017) have developed a framework which focuses on sexuality educators and the competencies they should have, or develop, in order to conduct sexuality education. The framework is intended to provide support and to facilitate the implementation of training programmes for sexuality educators and/or improve the quality of existing programmes. It is intended as a foundation document to guide countries in the development of their own training manuals and methods

In answer to the question 'Why should educators be trained for sexuality education?', The WHO identified the following:

- Training of sexuality educators is one of the key factors influencing the quality of sexuality education programmes
- Sexuality education differs from other topic areas in different ways. These differences make specific training for educators in this area especially crucial
- Learners and sexuality educators themselves demand quality training of sexuality educators
- In addition to training, sexuality educators need a supportive environment in order to deliver sexuality education in an effective, enabling and inclusive way

The framework presents different components of the interrelated competencies sexuality educators should possess in order to conduct sexuality education – namely attitudes, skills and knowledge.



**Interrelationship of attitudes, skills and knowledge**

## **Overview of Components of competencies of educators**

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### **Attitudes**

- Commitment to sexuality education
- Respect for integrity and understanding of boundaries
- Open-mindedness and respect for others

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### **Skills**

- Ability to create and maintain a safe, inclusive and enabling learning environment
- Ability to use interactive teaching and learning approaches
- Ability to communicate effectively
- Ability to reflect on beliefs and values

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### **Knowledge**

- Knowledge about relevant topics in sexuality education
- Basic knowledge of health promotion and psychology
- Knowledge of methods on how to deliver sexuality education
- Knowledge about different sexuality education approaches and their impact



# Attitudes

## **Commitment to Sexuality Education**

- Be willing and motivated to teach sexuality education
- Be committed to the principles of comprehensive and holistic sexuality education
- Be convinced that comprehensive and holistic sexuality education has a positive impact on the (sexual) health and well-being of learners
- Be prepared to examine and challenge harmful sexual and gender norms and practices, injustices and vulnerabilities
- Be willing to challenge personal opinions, norms and feelings related to topics in sexuality, different cultural and religious backgrounds, abilities, gender identities and sexual orientation of learners, their parents and colleagues (other educators)
- Be aware that own experiences, attitudes and behaviour influence the way of educating learners
- Be responsive to parents' concerns about sexuality education and be prepared to address them with respect and by reasoning with evidence-based information

## **Respect for integrity and understanding of boundaries**

- Respect privacy and the physical, psychological and sexual integrity of oneself and others (learners, parents, colleagues)
- Refrain from disclosing information about the sexuality of learners
- Refrain from sharing personal information about own sexuality
- Be willing to reflect on and understand personal and other people's situations, feelings, beliefs, attitudes and values (including own biases and personal opinions) regarding sexuality and relationships
- Be aware of and accept own boundaries and limitations and be willing to refer to other professionals
- Be committed to treating all persons, regardless of their different backgrounds, abilities, gender identities and sexual orientation, with respect and dignity
- Demonstrate zero tolerance of sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination and be prepared to protect learners from it

## **Open mindedness and respect for others**

- Regard sexuality as a positive potential of all individuals
- Demonstrate a positive attitude and respect towards sexuality in children, young people and adults, according to their age and development level
- Be willing to leave children and young people their freedom and the social space they need to develop their sexuality according to their age and development level
- Be open about different backgrounds, abilities, gender identities and sexual orientation
- Demonstrate an understanding for societal, cultural, religious, familial and individual factors influencing sexual behaviours and other expressions of sexuality
- Demonstrate understanding of and respect for human rights that apply to learners, their parents and colleagues, including sexual and reproductive rights as stipulated in relevant policies, conventions and declarations
- Understand and respect the many different perspectives relating to sexual choices, behaviours and expression
- Respect and create awareness of social responsibility and promote tolerance



## Skills

### **Ability to create and maintain a safe, inclusive and enabling learning environment**

- Be able to create and maintain a safe, inclusive and enabling learning environment so that all learners of different cultural and religious backgrounds, abilities, gender identities and sexual orientations feel protected, included and empowered to participate
- Be able to use sexuality education to promote and reinforce health-promoting-school policies (including prevention of sexual and gender-based violence)
- Be vigilant for early symptoms, markers or signs of aggressive behaviour, sexual and gender-based violence and abuse among learners and colleagues and respond adequately
- Be able to establish rules about respect, confidentiality and questions

## **Ability to use interactive teaching and learning approaches**

- Be able to use a wide range of interactive and participatory student-centered approaches and tools to help learners stay engaged, acquire knowledge, stimulate reflection and communication and develop skills necessary for building healthy relationships and making informed decisions
- Be able to search and assess existing materials and methods in order to identify evidence informed, age- and development-appropriate materials and effective methods.

## **Ability to communicate effectively**

- Be able to communicate with confidence and in a non-judgmental way
- Be able to use appropriate language that is understood by the learners, that feels comfortable and takes into account different cultural and religious backgrounds, abilities, gender identities and sexual orientations
- Be able to discuss openly various sexuality-related topics and issues with learners in an age-appropriate and development-appropriate, culturally sensitive and multi-perspective way
- Be able to refrain from imposing personal views, beliefs and assumptions on learners
- Be able to analyse and critically discuss social and cultural contexts and factors that influence sexuality and sexual behaviour of learners
- Be able to communicate effectively with learners and their parents on complex and controversial topics related to sexuality in a professional and non-judgmental way
- Be able to respond appropriately to provocative questions and statements

## **Ability to communicate effectively**

- Be able to reflect critically and constructively on and understand personal feelings, beliefs, experiences, attitudes and values (including biases and prejudices) regarding sexuality and relationships
- Be able to reflect on and better understand others' feelings, beliefs, attitudes and values regarding sexuality and relationships
- Be able to reflect on what is understood as "normal" by learners and in the wider society (e.g. body image, gender roles)
- Be able to support learners in developing critical thinking (for example, in differentiating between reliable and unreliable sources of information)



# Knowledge

## **Ability to create and maintain a safe, inclusive and enabling learning environment**

- The human body and human development (e.g. all body parts, their function, different body types, age differences in bodies and their development)
- Fertility and reproduction (e.g. pregnancy, birth, menstrual cycle and development, impact of motherhood and fatherhood)
- Sexuality in general (e.g. emotion, feelings, physical aspects, enjoyment, pleasure, different sexual expressions and behaviour, sexuality at different ages, gender differences)
- Variety of emotions (e.g. different types of emotions, words for emotions, different kinds of love and differences between love, friendship, etc.)
- Relationships and different lifestyles (e.g. friendship, companionship, dating relationships, same-sex relationships; various forms of family relationships and their breakdown, maintaining relationships)
- Sexuality, health and well-being (e.g. how to build up awareness of own body; symptoms, risks and consequences of unsafe, unpleasant and unwanted sexual experiences; transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, prevention, treatment, care and support; risky sexual behaviour and its consequences, sexual abuse, positive influence of sexuality on health and wellbeing)

- Sexuality and rights (e.g. international sexual rights of children, national laws and regulations)
- Social and cultural determinants of sexuality (e.g. social, cultural and religious norms and values in different societies; influence of peer pressure, media, pornography, laws on sexual decisions, partnership and behaviour)

### **Basic Knowledge of Health Promotion and Psychology**

- Psychosexual development and theory of socialization of children and young people
- Learning styles and learning strategies of learners
- Communication and crisis intervention
- Behaviour development and/or change
- Concept of health literacy
- Models and good practice of sexual health promotion
- Determinants of sexual behaviour of learners (e.g. background, school environment, family, peers)
- Relevant support services, including referral systems, for learners and educators for information on sexuality and health

### **Knowledge of how to deliver sexuality education**

- Interactive and participatory teaching methods appropriate for specific target groups (with different backgrounds and abilities) and learning objectives
- Knowledge of different quality materials, lesson packages and sources of information for educators
- Knowledge of how to organize, manage and conduct a project and lessons in sexuality education (e.g. coordinating different actors in a project, planning field trips)
- The language children and young people use in regard to sexuality
- Accurate terminology in different fields dealing with sexuality (e.g. psychology, medicine, sociology)
- Strategies and techniques to empower learners in media literacy, especially in respect of social media
- Online and offline information provided about sexuality used by learners (e.g. pornography and its messages, magazines, books)

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