

## **Children scripting sexualities, adult attitudes and school-based sex education in Zimbabwe**

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### **Abstract**

The paper explores the relationship between graffiti produced by primary school children in Zimbabwe and sexuality and/reproductive education offered by the school system. It tags onto a newspaper article that revealed a proposed bid by the Zimbabwean government to legalise the provision and distribution of contraceptives to teenagers in a bid to alleviate the negative consequences of reckless and irresponsible teen sexual behaviours. The ensuing national outrage and debate was reflective of endemic and latent adult attitudes towards adolescent sexuality. The research is based on findings from data obtained from boys' and girls' toilets from six primary schools in the Zimbabwean urban City of Gweru. Using a Bakhtinian dialogic approach in calling for a need to include children's voices in the formulation and development of sexuality education, the paper reveals how the confinement of sexuality into adult matrimonial spaces has resulted in a sexuality education that is inherently moralistic and didactic in which explicit pictures of shame, disease and death are painted. Moreover, sexuality education is based on what adults think the children know about sexuality. It therefore argues that graffiti inscriptions by adolescents is evidence of how children are not empty vessels they take them to be and that sexuality education should at least speak to issues emerging from children's sexual inscriptions.

**Key words:** Graffiti inscriptions, sexuality education, adult attitudes, dialogue, dialogic approach