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## JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

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ISSN: 1305-578X

*Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18 (Special Issue 1), 941-959; 2022

### Ecological Sexuality Education

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#### APA Citation:

Suárez, A.A.G., Núñez, R.P., Castro, W.R.A. , (2022) Ecological Sexuality Education, *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(Special Issue 1), 941-959.

Submission Date: 20/10/2021

Acceptance Date: 25/01/2022

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#### ABSTRACT

The objective of this article was to understand the ecological education of functional and meaningful sexuality, linked to the integral formation of children and adolescents and its influence on the processes of individual and social development. The research was developed through the qualitative approach, under the interpretative paradigm, with a phenomenological perspective and a field design. Ten participants were selected from a public educational institution in the city of Cúcuta (Colombia), to whom an in-depth interview was applied. In the results, it is possible to infer that the construction of knowledge on sexuality should not be cumulative and without ideological biases, since there are ecological interrelationships, for example, the one established between school and family through the student. It is concluded that an ecological education on sexuality should start from the recognition of oneself for a harmonious life and its influence on the processes of individual and social development, in the training to develop self-esteem, to give and receive love, to feel pleasure and in the responsible and respectful procreation of life, seeking the prevention of problems related to sexuality.

**Keywords:** education, ecology, ecology, sexuality, ecological paradigm.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, incidents of teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse of young people, rape, bullying, sexually transmitted infections, confusions with sexual orientation, stigmatization and stereotypes are reported, all these problems are framed in sexuality and gender identity (Oliveras *et al.*, 2018; Arias *et al.*, 2019; Yances & Sierra, 2019). The occurrence of such cases leads parents, educators, teaching managers, educational authorities and global agencies to reflect on the quality of training for sexuality from the first stage of child development (Dolores *et al.*, 2018; Chaparro *et al.*, 2018; Rincón-Ramírez, 2017). From another perspective, these stated problematics also reflect weaknesses and errors that emerge and are reproduced in different systems such as social, educational, political and cultural (Yances *et al.*, 2020; Barrientos & Arranz, 2019). Therefore, there is a special challenge in terms of sexuality education for both children and adolescents.

Global entities such as the World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) consider that identity, patterns, attractions and gender roles, as well as intimacy, sex, enjoyment and reproduction, including pornography, discrimination, equality, empathy, responsibility and reciprocity, are inherent aspects of being human. Sexuality is “a basic aspect of human life, with physical, psychological, spiritual, social, economic, political and cultural dimensions, [which] is linked to the development of the individual's identity” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 37). On the other hand, UNICEF (2015) stipulates that notions about health, and sexual and reproductive rights should be provided from the early stages of development, and therefore, there is a co-responsibility of the school and the family about this objective.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, proposed by the United Nations for the Beijing Action Agenda, incorporates among the goals universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (International Planned Parenthood Federation - IPPF, 2015). Indeed, it establishes the insertion of comprehensive sexuality education in the educational system appropriate to the different cognitive ages, as an instrument of empowerment that promotes health, human rights and gender equality (Forero-Salcedo, 2019). Hence, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2011): “educational processes have a determining role in the acquisition of indispensable competencies to take care of one's health, to make decisions about sexual and reproductive life” (p. 20).

Now, in terms of sex education in Colombia, Resolution 3353 (1993) of the Ministry of National Education (hereinafter Mineducación) establishes that sex education should promote and strengthen all students knowledge, skills, values, feelings, concepts and behaviors for the development of personality and autonomy on affection and equality among people. The institutionalization of this training was established through the figure of transversal pedagogical projects according to Article 14 of Law 115 (1994) (Tiusaba, 2017). This norm, also called General Education Law, sexual education seeks for the formation of a free personality, respectful of the rights of others, affirmation and imagination for life and democracy, awareness of moral components, culture and ethics will help the individual to build his identity, life project and recognize differences, train in the prevention and preservation of health and hygiene as an issue of social relevance.

Thinking today's school, to educate for sexuality from the right approach (Mineducación, 2008), means facing new realities and understanding how they affect them. It is important to understand that sexuality in human beings, unlike other organisms, is not governed by instinctive and universal directives of the reproductive propensity of the species, and although it is regulated by biological nature and by the influence of society, it constitutes a complex social, cultural, biological and cognitive construction of individuals. Each person develops his or her personality through the meanings resulting from experiences in the framework of the world of life, so that sexual identity is a dynamic, complex, dialogical and transcendental process, characterized by mutual interrelationships and bidirectional transactions between human beings and the components of the environmental systems that influence sexual behavior.

There are different studies in the scientific literature on sexuality and sex education in which they have sought to investigate the related ecological factors, the particularities of assimilated school sex instruction and its relationship with the age of sexual initiation (González, 2015), as well as, the education of sexuality in the family and school context (Luisi, 2013), the sources of information such as family, friends, school, clubs, media among others (Barbón, 2011), the role of the educator in such instruction and the school educational process (González *et al.*, 2015). Research has also been conducted on the analysis of sexuality in young people from the ecological model (Vianchá *et al.*, 2012) and the transversality of the sexuality program in the curriculum to strengthen the life project (De la Cruz & Osorio, 2020).

Sexuality is regulated and directed by several institutions: the family, the school, the church, the State, and even the media, although it corresponds to a diverse, varied, unique and multifaceted phenomenon in each person (Revilla, 2013). And it is not for less because it includes emotions, self-image, feelings, relationships and interactions with others and physical contact. In other words, sexuality in humans transcends species reproduction. Independent of reproduction, people develop a mix of ideas and emotions that turn sexuality into a complex and dynamic network that shapes life.

To this end, UNESCO (2018) recommends and encourages sexuality education that is holistic as “a curriculum-based process for teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality” (p. 18). It also adds that it is a right of individuals, an inescapable task of families, communities, institutional bodies and the State. The objective is to prepare students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required to achieve health, well-being and dignity through the free and responsible exercise of sexuality.

An irrefutable premise must be considered: man always acts as a sexed being and manifests himself within a deeply dialectical configuration and with a very complex human condition, with specific aspects such as sexuality understood as the way of living and feeling, related to biological, social, cultural, spiritual, psychological, economic and ethical components (Triana, 2018). According to González and Castellano (2017), sexuality can be interpreted “as a form of expression, a language that allows a total and transcendent communication between human beings” (p. 23), a phenomenon that manifests itself in human interactions in specific environments.

This environment is considered as an ecological environment by Bronfenbrenner (1987), in which there are changes in terms of human development that can last over time and have an impact on the way people perceive the environment and their relationships. This approach considers three levels in people's environment. First, their relationship with their immediate environment, second, the interrelationship with the links between environments, and third, how people are affected from the outside. These levels interact with each other and with the individual throughout life through a staggered and orderly organization of levels ranging from the micro (system) through meso and exo (as systems each) to the macro (macrosystem).

The ecological principles of human development have been applied to the field of pedagogy that explains pedagogical scenarios (Urbina, 2017), where the educational institution is elucidated as a social educational ecosystem: it presents elements such as population, interdependence, interrelationships, environment, organizational, among others that configure it; likewise, it helps to understand the pedagogical and educational fact from the study of cultural reality, the environment and its components, where individuals adapt to the context.

In this regard, following Bronfenbrenner (1987) in Vianchá *et al.* (2012), for the case of young people: 1) microsystems tend to be concentrated in the family, the couple and peers (immediate environment); 2) mesosystems translate into two or more microsystems (e.g., the relationship between the couple and the peer group or between the family and the peer group); 3) ecosystems are composed of the closest communities after the family group (the school, the church, the media, recreational institutions) where the individual organism does not participate and is not directly (physically) involved, but events occur at this level that affect its microsystem; and 4) macrosystems are generalized patterns formed by the complex of serial and interconnected systems that are larger and broader (ideology and organization of social institutions of a culture or in the case of youth, music, fashion and subcultures).

In the framework of the ecological approach, there is a complex multilevel connection that leads to new considerations in the framework of pedagogy, teaching and learning. According to Gimeno Sacristán

& Pérez Gómez (2021), classroom life in terms of socio-cultural exchanges is ecologically configured by its constituents, components, social and cultural systems that contain the peculiarities of the events in the classroom, the teacher and the student who create roles and patterns of their own, group and collective behavior. From this perspective, it is required to capture the significant networks of influence that shape classroom life, in other words, processes in the socio-cultural context of the learning environment, including the relationships and reciprocities within the social system of the classroom, which is open, interactive and interchangeable. The school and the classroom as ecological environments: they present characteristics of synchronic correspondences at different levels throughout the educational system.

This article presents an investigation that broadens the vision of sexual education, taking into account the multiplicity of elements that influence its development and how a complex interaction is formed between them. Some models focus on the individual, leaving aside other environments such as the family, work and educational institutions. We believe that, within the framework of sexuality education, the individual is overcome under a systemic logic. The purpose of this research was to understand a functional and meaningful ecological sexuality education, linked to the integral formation of children and adolescents and its influence on the processes of individual and social development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research was developed through the qualitative research approach, within the epistemological framework of the interpretative-hermeneutic paradigm, since it is situated within the educational reality, from a naturalistic-ecological dimension, which defends that human actions are partially determined by the context and environment in which they occur (Sandín, 2003). And as Martínez (2004) puts it: “the human being is an interpretative being because the true nature of human reality is interpretative” (p. 107).

The phenomenological method was used, which allows for developing a complex description of the awareness of the ecological education of sexuality, both in the search and analysis of information following a process of analytical induction as a way of perceiving and approaching reality. Indeed, it seeks to represent the meaning of the experience from the perspective of those who have lived it from their significant and interesting existence, which is why the experiences with the subjects under study, in their world and that can only be understood within their contexts, are investigated (Alvarez-Gayou, 2009).

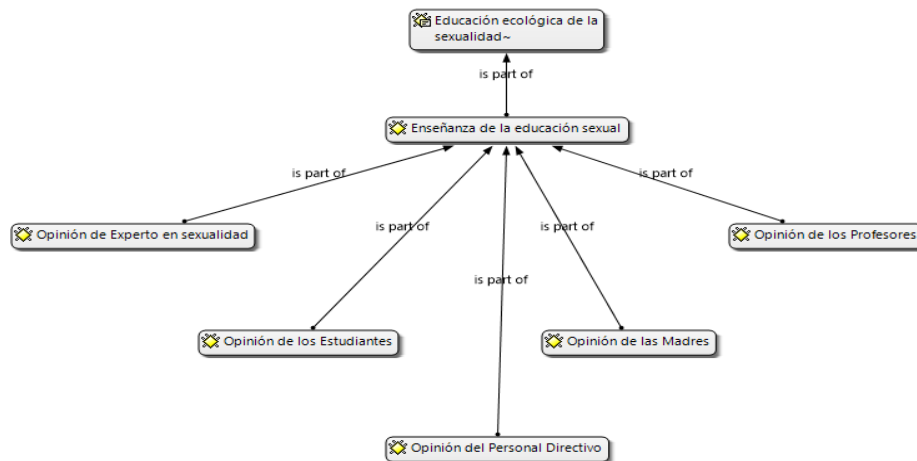
On the other hand, the research design was field-based and from this projection, relevant information was collected on sexual education and training in dialogue with the places where human actions gain meaning and significance. The study scenario corresponded to a public educational institution located in the city of Cúcuta, Colombia. Ten (10) key informants were conveniently selected, under the criteria of heterogeneity and accessibility: students (E1 and E2), teachers (P1 and P2), management staff (PD1 and PD2), mothers (M1 and M2) and sexology experts (ES1 and ES2)

A semi-structured interview was designed and applied, through which contact was made with the individuals, creating conditions that allowed the participants to freely express what they thought and felt, using their language which is part of their natural reality. The interview was structured through a research script referring to the following aspects: teaching of sexual education, construction of knowledge about sexuality, role of parents, mass media, ecological sexual education. The interview was validated through expert judgment.

The data were processed through a coding and categorization exercise with the support of Atlas Ti software. By systematizing the information provided by the informants, the following categories emerged: teaching of sexual education, construction of sexual knowledge within the subject, role of parents and the media in sexual education, and ecological sexual education.

## INTERPRETATION OF INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

### Category: Teaching sex education.



**Figure 1.** Category: Teaching sex education.

Deconstructing received ideas on issues related to sexuality, as well as anatomy; sexual and reproductive rights, taboos from an early age; promoting exchanges between peers; fighting sexism, phobia and all other violence related to sexuality, all within a framework of pedagogical practices, is often not easy for educators. The development of student competencies is promoted in the school context through teaching sequences that often fail to be coherent with the wide diversity of sexuality and the questions/issues that emerge among students.

Teachers and professors, contribute to the sexuality education of students, on the one hand, as gendered persons perceived as role models, on the other hand, responding with a pedagogy adapted to the specific questions or behaviors of the students at each stage of their development (Zambrano-Vargas & Vásquez-García, 2019). In this direction, they are called to develop in a transversal way in their teaching the psychosocial skills that support health, citizenship and, therefore, sexual health and their sexuality, as well as contribute to their life projects.

From the dimension of teachers' opinion, subjects P1 and P2, state:

Well-trained teachers, feel comfortable supporting the development and well-being of students. [...] the interest is that they can have a good sexuality and equip them to make the best possible decisions (P1).

[...] many times teaching is geared towards students studying for an exam and not for life [...] Some teachers are traditionalists. (P2)

[...] there are still limitations, there is a bias in the information, of not calling things as they are [...] nonexistent in the first educational stages [...] deficient. (P1)

To ensure quality sexuality education, it is important that teachers promote the development of cross-cutting skills (collaboration, communication, learning strategies, creative and reflective thinking) on one's own sexuality, through the organization and implementation of specific projects and/or the participation of educational actors (students, parents and representatives, management staff, among others). However, this is not evident in the teaching context. In this regard, stakeholders point out:

**Dimension: Student opinion.**

[...] yes but no, sometimes we know more than the teacher (E1).

They bring specialists to give lectures on diseases, contraceptive methods, reproduction [...] We make expository billboards (E2).

There is more information through social networks (E1).

When I talk to my dad about sex, he tells me when I have a girlfriend to try not to get her pregnant, to behave like a man, like a macho man, to be careful about leaving children around, but he doesn't tell me how I should or shouldn't do it (E2).

My mother only explained to me what I should or should not do when I got my period for the first time, and that I had to take good care of myself, to open my eyes, to pay attention to who I was with and to be careful about getting pregnant (E1).

**Dimension: Mothers' opinions**

On the one hand, it is good because the student learns what one is not able to teach them, but on the other hand this makes the student curious and they begin to experiment and look for information with friends, social networks, which is not bad, but sometimes that information is distorted (M1).

I don't think there is, only about contraceptive methods, venereal diseases and others [...] I don't know much about it and sometimes you don't know how to explain yourself (M2).

**Dimension: Expert opinion**

The level of information has increased, educators dare to talk more, but they talk more about sex and not about sexuality [...] (ES1).

Inadequate information, half-baked. The information has more to do with the biological aspect (ES2).

Sometimes not very updated (ES1)

Parents should be prepared and involved in the sexual education of their children (ES1).

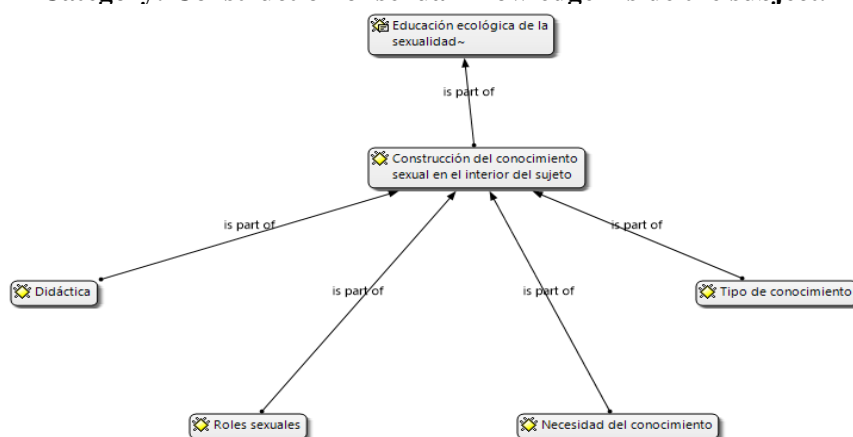
In light of the opinions expressed by each of the informants, and under the protocol established for this purpose, it is evident to the current situation of sex education that there are differences between the opinions of teachers (informants P1 and P2) who state that sex education is deficient. This information differs from that given by experts and management personnel (informants ES1, ES2, PD1 and PD2) who point out that the level of information has increased, although little and without the required relevance. However, parents and students (informants M1, M2, E1 and E2) state that there is no sex education, but that they have received information on sexually transmitted diseases and contraceptive methods, which places the education provided in the area of the risk of sex, but not in the complex area of sexuality.

Sex education is a necessity, which implies that the people in charge of doing it have to confront their own sexuality in order not to mark positions and to have a more integral vision of sexuality, to be able to develop adequate strategies and methods. This implies a change of attitude so as not to continue making a wrong transmission about sexuality. However, according to González (2021), talking about sexuality in a country like Colombia represents the search for control of that which every human being lives by right and instinct; it is undoubtedly one of the most difficult conversations to carry out, because it is believed that it should be hidden, and for some parents and educational institutions, there is a thin line between encouraging sexual relations and educating about sexuality.

Sex education programs generate a lot of controversies, because sometimes they are limited only to providing information, which restricts learning. In this sense, for Gonzalez (2021), the sexuality education models that are proposed have an adult-centric vision that takes into account only the criteria of adults, leaving aside the realities of the students, especially adolescents about their sexuality.

It is not a question of incorporating sex education into the curriculum, but how to teach it. Although the General Education Law (Law 115, 1994) establishes that sex education is mandatory in public and private institutions in the country, its development is precarious. According to the Ministry of Health and Profamilia (2015), 80% of adolescents between 14 and 18 years old stated that they have not participated in any sex education classes in public and private institutions in Colombia.

### Category: Construction of sexual knowledge inside the subject.



**Figure 2.** Category: Construction of sexual knowledge inside the subject.

### Dimension: Need for knowledge

The scope of sexuality education is very broad and children and adolescents of different ages need different knowledge. Sex education in the country seems to be very conservative. Although, with the development of society, the promotion of gender equality, the mastery of principles and skills that require people to constantly think and learn about sexual knowledge, their positive sexual values, face

sexual problems, and conflicts, and adopt healthy and safe behaviors, enable such people to understand sex, life and love, among other aspects of sexuality. For informants:

The student must be helped to discover this knowledge (PD2).

That they internalize and associate sexual information, not as a taboo and learn to behave as human beings about sex. (ES1).

It is necessary when they are asked about what they understand by sexuality, answers such as when one has sex, which is related to the reproductive organs when a man has sex with a woman, which is important so that women do not get pregnant. (P1).

A knowledge adequate to their physical, and mental maturation processes about sex, not just the anatomical or disease part, should be provided. (ES2)

This knowledge should not come from only one direction, in this sense, there should be an agreement between the school, the family, the environment, the religion that in many opportunities falls into contradictions about what is taught at school (ES1).

Corresponding to the above, it is considered that students need this knowledge in terms of their cognitive age if they can accept this knowledge and what impact this knowledge can have in the future. Secondly, it is peremptory to establish a suitable environment for students' growth, which includes the family environment, the school environment, the social environment and the media environment. Hence, the emphasis is on the types of knowledge:

### **Dimension: Type of knowledge**

That adequate knowledge of their own physical and mental and emotional maturation processes related to sex is provided (ES1).

That the information and language transmitted are important (M2).

That the learning is meaningful since part of that knowledge is acquired by themselves, their friends, and social networks. (P1)

In childhood, there is curiosity about the genital organs, but in adolescence, there is another discovery which is the sexual organs plus their sexuality. (PD2)

Sexuality education should start in childhood and go through the school trajectories until adolescence with curricular adaptations according to the characteristics and sociocultural, cognitive and emotional particularities of each stage. To this extent, teachers should place all these elements at the center of the discussion and pedagogical reflection in order to adopt training objectives and strategies that allow for a pertinent, coherent and fair sexuality education.



**Dimension: Sexual roles.**

Another emerging concept is related to sexual roles, from which certain points of view assumed by the informants and which are of interest for the research are thrown out:

It is necessary and a well-planned sexual education would be important in the formation of students' identity (P2).

Knowledge should be directed to the formation of men as men and women as women in order to complement each other, that there is no superior or inferior sex, that we are not antagonists. (ES2).

When students arrive at the institution they already bring a series of knowledge that they have acquired at home and they know about behaviors according to the sex of each one, but the problems begin, for example, the line before entering class, one for females and another for males, when there is a male who is very effeminate (mamito) the others make fun and tell him to behave like a man and this is often encouraged by the teacher. (PD1).

The assignment of roles is specific to each one, the educational practice is based on stereotyped sexual roles teacher-mother, student-son, when games are defined, the strong ones for the males and the weak ones for the females. (ES2)

Regardless of the desires, needs of young people or real requirements of society, in sexuality education, both in schools and in families, more attention should be paid to the education of sexual morality, including sexual self-determination, protection and sexual relations. More than the vague transmission of concepts such as morality, law and social gender, what is relevant is to reinvent didactics for a comprehensive sexuality education, where students learn the traditional division of gender roles and their impact on intimate relationships: learning to accept themselves and others, to build a dignified, egalitarian, healthy and responsible life. On this particular issue, the subjects expressed:

**Dimension: Didactics.**

This knowledge is important for the integral formation of the student, but teachers must be prepared so that they have a different vision of what sexual education should be, as well as the didactic resource, so that teachers can help solve the problems that arise related to sexuality. (ES2)

Sexuality must be educated, not just schooled, develop an evaluation plan for sexual education, not only to study for an exam, it must be formative for the student to understand and discover their sexuality and everything that has to do with it. (ES1)

Education should be lifelong, and start as early as possible and adapt to each age because nowadays adolescence wakes up earlier, growth is accelerated, as well as hormonal development. (PD2)

**Dimension: Attitudes**

Sometimes students show behaviors through strong aggressions, which are usually expressions that are related to the expressions that adults keep at home or in the communities related to sexual matters, which sometimes are traumatic and begin to influence students, which are translated into writings on

the bathroom walls, such as so-and-so is a whore, so-and-so is a fag, so-and-so got fucked by three, so-and-so sleeps with so-and-so and the other and the other. (ES2).

Regarding the construction of sexual knowledge within the subject, the information provided by the interviewees suggests the need for construction of knowledge on sexual education, in which the student is helped to discover this knowledge and that learning is meaningful, that is, taking into account the way sexuality is learned in reality: the human sexual condition is broad, includes all layers and is not a single morphological or anatomical or physiological interpretation.

This knowledge about sexuality through sex education is built within the subject through an interpretation of reality, not only from a biological adaptation, but also in response to the need to give meaning to the physical and social environment where one lives, for which not only what should be learned, but also how it should be learned, taking into account the new in mediating instruments, must be modified. In this sense, Vigotsky (1995) considers that from an encompassing perspective of education, it can be understood that the social context of man's existence is both the space-time that shelters him and the cognizable object, by his learning capacity.

This process of appropriation of sexual knowledge never ends and influences the orientation of life; it implies taking into account the conditions of the subject to be able to construct and appropriate this sexual knowledge to use appropriately. From constructivism, it is necessary to establish differences between the construction of knowledge made by the subject himself, as a process that takes place in his interior and the conditions that make possible this construction referred to the external conditions of the subject, but which is not a copy of the external reality, but that each subject elaborates it without denying reality, through the resistances that the subject finds in his actions and that he attributes to reality itself.

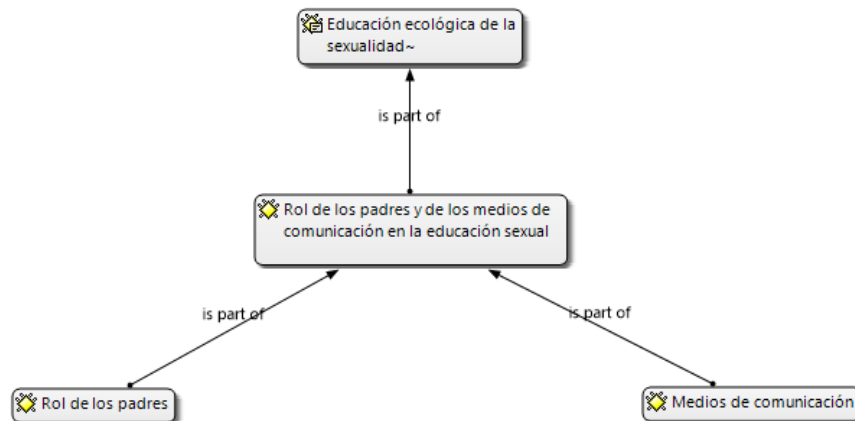
This construction of knowledge on sexuality should not be cumulative but should imply different conceptions, varied teaching and learning strategies, creative actions of the teacher and a coherent orientation of the evaluation, that is, a general methodological change, without ideological biases, to turn this learning into meaningful learning that connects with the capacity of understanding and where motivation is assured (Ausubel, 1983).

For this, the curricular design must be flexible and open, without meaning the absence of planning, objectives, contents, teaching and learning strategies, that there is a contrast between the proposed curriculum and the evaluated one and thus ensure the incorporation of the new and the necessary modifications, which favors the construction of knowledge so that it can trigger the respective critical reflection from the initial information and enable the development of new explanations.

About the attitudes of the informants towards sex education, how they view sexuality was evidenced, some categorize it as taboo, there are misconceptions, especially on the part of parents and teachers; students refer to attitudes towards situations they have experienced, however, some experts provide information on attitudes that have to do with the problems of adolescents and their sexuality, to the importance of sex and sexuality.

In this regard, the teacher's role should be to coordinate the student's cognitive activity that regulates learning, that the teacher is capable of a change of attitude to be able to understand situations such as unwanted pregnancies in adolescents, rape, sexual abuse, their first time, as well as the difficulties posed by their own sexual relations about contraceptive methods, sexual infections, among others, because all the questions asked by students are important, no matter how crazy they are, teaching other students respect and avoiding jokes towards them.

**Category: The role of parents and the media in sex education.**



**Figure 3.** Category: The role of parents and the media in sex education.

**Dimensions: Role of parents**

Parents are the closest and most trusted persons for a child or young person, and the family is also the first environment with which they have come into contact, and sexual cognition of them, is a constant exploration from birth. The words of informant P2 illustrate this idea well:

The role of parents is important in sex education, but some parents have some fear about it because students start asking questions at home related to what they are taught at school about sexuality because they are curious by nature. (P2)

While family sexuality education is a process of continuous and changing needs throughout the life cycle, adult sexuality education can take the initiative to explore according to their own needs. In this regard, these teachers consider parents to be key in this role:

Parents should be able to discuss the physical and behavioral aspects of sexuality with children (P2).

Some parents feel inhibited to talk about sex with their children, and when they do it is to prevent them from unwanted pregnancy, rape, or bullying, but other parents agree with sex education at school so their role has begun to activate, especially young parents' couples, which makes their children lose their fear to communicate and thus make prevention. (PD2)

If parents can instill correct sex education and cultivate healthy sexual attitudes in their lives from an early age, it follows that they can not only be safe through the period of adolescence but can promote excitement and communication between parents and children. Because sex education for young people is easily influenced by the media, magazines, books, or peers.

**Dimension: Media**

Regarding this emerging variable, the key informants stated that:

Sometimes we are a little afraid to talk about sex with our children because they get any kind of information on social networks. (M2).

The training they receive through TV is not good, they show movies where sexual relations are exhibited at the adult level, rape, abuse, for any publicity they resort to sex, exhibiting almost naked bodies and insinuating both heterosexual and homosexual relations. In social networks there is good and bad information (P2).

The media have a very important role in the transmission of ideas and the construction that the subject makes of social reality because this is a product of culture, which Pérez (2012) calls experiential culture, and is extremely important in the case of sexuality and one of its main values. Hence, an ecological education of sexuality should be a basic component of family education where the child learns some values and norms that later condition sexual behaviors. For González & Castellanos (2017) the family constitutes the first agent of socialization of sexuality and is the most stable reference group in life for the formation of values, convictions, behavioral norms, conceptions and sexual attitudes.

Informants expressed that parents are afraid to talk to their children about sexuality, but that this role has begun to be activated, so learning to be parents in this sense is difficult. Most parents repeat the same pattern of teaching they received which produces failures in communication. Just because the child or adolescent does not ask does not mean that he or she does not want to know. Sometimes they are discouraged from asking because of the attitude some parents take towards the subject. Some parents think they are not capable of doing it, do not consider themselves qualified and are reluctant to do it, partly due to their sexual inhibitions that make it difficult, and others reject some sex education programs.

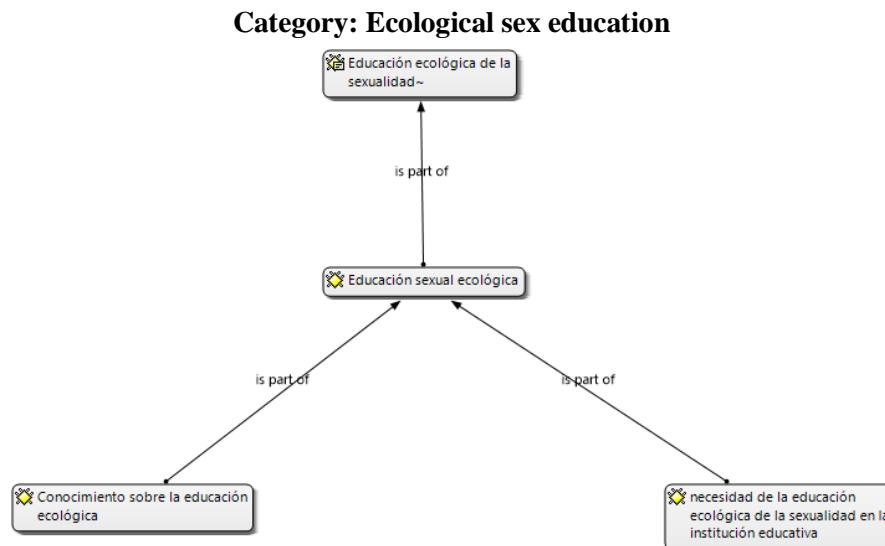
The error lies in the fact that the parents' opinion has not been taken into account beforehand, which causes them bewilderment in the face of their inhibitions on the subject. But, on the other hand, some parents have less and less time for their children, to listen to them, to take care of them regarding sexuality, partly due to the demands of society such as excessive work, parents who leave early in the morning and return late at night, so there is no control, no responsibility and no authority.

On the other hand, concerning the media, watching television, including streaming or platforms to watch movies or series, is one of the most important and most influential pastimes in the lives of children and adolescents today, which, although it can entertain, inform and accompany them, can also influence them in an undesirable way. Sometimes the information transmitted by these entertainment media is more important than the information given at school. Memory and memories and emotional charge are not only formed by the contents that are stored consciously, but those that have been acquired unconsciously and are stored in the deep mind.

However, with the rise of the Internet and social networks, according to Causado & Pacheco (2020)

In this new knowledge society framed in information and communication technologies, which invites a deep and constant reflection and a paradigm shift of social communication, and therefore of education, focused on the formation of more critical individuals with the media, assertive, creative, autonomous, innovative, able to question and self-questioning (p. 4).

Therefore, there is a need to analyze the underlying discourses and ideologies that generate worlds of cultural representation that influence people's actions. The media frame a new guideline in educational contexts and invite us to rethink the roles played by educational actors even outside the school context.



**Figure 4.** Category: Ecological sex education.

**Dimension: Knowledge of ecological education**

From the current learning perspective, it is understood that the environment affects the development of the individual and is intervened by the developing subject. It seems that it does not yet form a clear picture of the environment in which the individual develops, but the various environments in which people live and the interrelationships that are formed have a significant impact on their future development. Biological and environmental factors interact to influence such human development, which provides an impact on the environment. From the vision of the informants it is expressed as follows:

When one teaches biology one considers ecological education as related to the environment (P1).

It has to do with the relationships among living beings (P2).

The relationships are established between living beings and the environment (ES2).

Education that takes into account the interrelationships between the environment and living beings (ES1).

Education with the environment (E1)

It is related to living beings and their education (E2).

I am not sure but maybe it has to do with ecology (M1).

**Dimension: need for ecological sexuality education in the educational institution**

On this dimension, the narratives of the actors express the following:

The educational institution is in charge of transmitting culture and sex education is important for students so that the information they receive is meaningful for their human development because there are cultural prejudices because a deficient sex education does not respond to the needs of children and young people, but exposes them to serious risks to their health and life, this sex education should be included in the PEI of the institution. (P2)

And it should go beyond the walls of the school and reach first the family and then the community (P2).

There is a need for sex education in the majority of young Colombians, due to a large number of unwanted pregnancies in adolescents, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, and sex at a young age without sufficient preparation and information, but it is necessary to involve parents and other people, as well as people who can help with the situation such as doctors, counselors, psychologists and also the media. For this, teachers must prepare themselves, and develop good didactics, but first, they must get rid of their taboos so that they do not feel uncomfortable discussing sexuality with their students. (P1).

An ecological education of sexuality is necessary since it helps to improve the communication skills of young people, which is one of the shortcomings that characterizes them, this guarantees health in terms of sexuality, biological, psychological and emotional development, the development of values, as well as respect for the sexuality of the people around them. For this, all members of the educational community should be involved, because this type of education should be transversal, including the family, the church, the media, and specialists in sexuality. However, it is not only about providing information on the physiology of the reproductive apparatus and moral precepts but also about achieving behavioral changes with appropriate strategies (ES1).

It is necessary and should offer spaces for discussion and reflection that allow understanding the meaning of sexuality beyond unwanted pregnancies and sexual infections, because ecologically there must be interrelationships and the first is the one established between school and family through the student, and both influence development from the time the subject is a child until reaching adolescence and cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context with its load of values, lifestyles, beliefs. (ES2).

Sex education is important for the integral formation of the individual, but it should not remain within the walls of the classroom. For teachers, it should first go beyond the family and into the community; parents and other people such as doctors, counselors, psychologists and the media should be involved. The experts thought that all members of the educational community should be involved because this type of education should be transversal, including the family, the church, the media, and people specializing in sexuality.

It is not only a matter of providing information on the physiology of the reproductive apparatus and moral precepts, but also the achievement of behavioral changes with appropriate strategies; likewise, ecologically there must be interrelationships and the first is the one established between the school and the family through the student, and both influence development from the time the subject is a child until reaching adolescence and cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context with its load of values, lifestyles, beliefs.

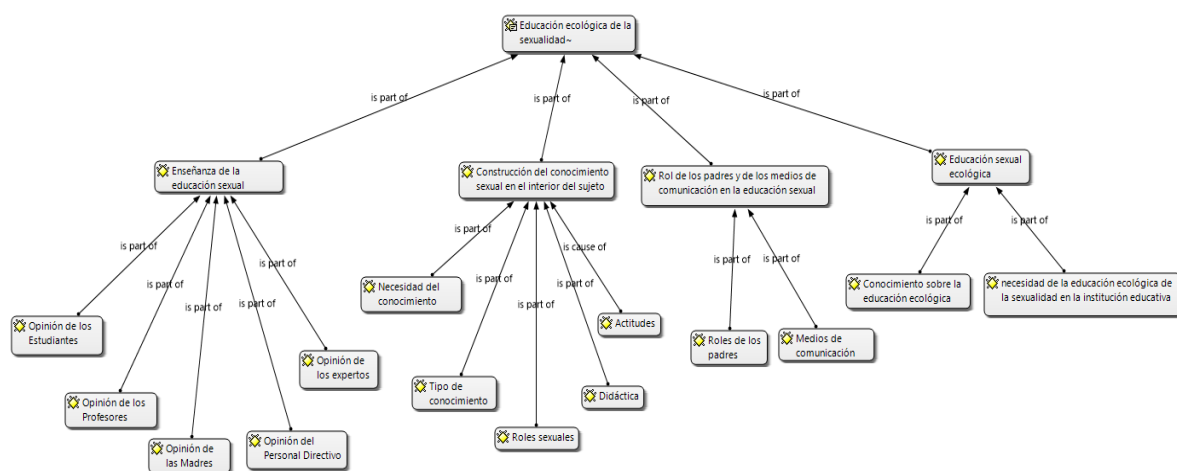
The above expressed by teachers and experts is related to the ecological paradigm of sexuality, proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1987) because what teachers and experts propose is that in sexuality education relationships and interactions are established in different contexts, in such a way that according to Vianchá et al. (2012):

The importance of sexuality is strongly related to its communicative function, understood in terms of interaction with others, as a way of expressing, exchanging and sharing feelings, emotions, desires, thoughts and actions that are influenced by the subjective relationship and the world surrounding the subject. (p. 76)

From what is expressed by teachers and expert informants, the micro level is recognized, one of the four levels proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1987) in his ecological paradigm, since it refers to the most immediate context of people and corresponds to the pattern of activities, roles, interpersonal relationships that the person experiences from the environment in which he/she participates such as school and family, however, for an ecological education of sexuality, the ecological environment must be conceived as the set of interconnected structures in the same phenomenon from its four different levels.

### Towards an ecological sexuality education

Taking into account the interactions between teachers, students, friends, school, family, community, and environment. All this is influenced by the curriculum and the media, especially the Internet and social networks, according to the ecological paradigm proposed by Bronfenbrenner:



Ecological sexuality education is oriented toward a more global vision of children and adolescents, leaving aside excessively biological and individual-centered approaches, so that the technical sexological reference loses then part of its weight to give way to a holistic ecological reference, which allows and facilitates multiple perspectives of work and analysis, as it is based on a broad concept of health that interrelates the physiological with the psychological and social.

Ecological sexuality education is part of the school curriculum and therefore it is time to consider how to introduce this cross-cutting theme in classroom programs. Its cross-cutting nature is indicative of the methodology that should accompany it: creating an open and informative environment on the subject and a positive attitude towards its development. A work-oriented in this sense and started early can facilitate a different attitude towards the body, so important as an instrument of pleasure socialization of sexuality, is the most stable reference group throughout life in terms of the formation of values, convictions, standards of behavior, conceptions and sexual attitudes.

In this sense, as parents, we have a lot to say and do in the sexual education of our children. As guardians and those morally responsible for them, they have the right and the obligation to intervene in this aspect

of the lives of children and adolescents, especially when there is a great disproportion between the little attention paid to it and the enormous importance it has as an essential component of people's lives.

The media, especially the internet and television, have a great influence on the sexual education of children and adolescents. The spaces bought by advertising companies where articles are promoted in direct relation to the performance of good sexuality, with direct or subliminal messages, show sex as something glamorous, instinctive and risk-free. In the series, movies and soap operas that are broadcasted, it seems that the talent of the actors is directly related to the little clothing they exhibit.

Therefore, through the training of parents, it will be possible to improve their ability to educate their children about sexuality, both in the family and in the school environment; Therefore, a forum for debate and study on people's sexuality should be created to support the specific actions planned by the educational institution during the school year. This will allow them to have greater communication with their children through school and thus be able to face assertively and firmly the influence that the mass media, especially television, exert on the sexual education of children and adolescents, influencing their imagination, intelligence, ethical and aesthetic evaluations.

About teachers' performance, they should be trained to assume the teaching of sexual education, be emotionally balanced, assertive, responsible, and flexible, and review their ideas, concepts, and attitudes, to avoid reductionism and misconceptions. New ways of designing actions that must be developed when teaching are demanded, through constructivist processes that require the transformation of the teaching exercise, so that learning is effective in sexual education; this leads to questioning some theoretical models, especially not importing those that have been successful in contexts with different cultural patterns. The teacher must take into account the cognitive structure of the subject of knowledge, as well as the procedures for teaching sex education, in such a way as to establish the link between the learner and his or her reality.

Therefore, there is a need for new proposals about sex education in the Colombian context through a contextual and interdisciplinary approach, understood as a natural process of human beings, as established by the Ministry of Education and UNFPA (2008) in the Program of Education for Sexuality and Citizenship Construction (PESCC), which aims to generate pedagogical practices that promote the development of competencies in students so that they can incorporate in their daily lives the exercise of human, sexual and reproductive rights and thus make decisions that allow them to live a healthy, full and responsible sexuality, which enriches their life project and that of others.

The above described translates into actions with activities within the curriculum to develop competencies for the development of sexuality, which can be embodied within a space in the educational institution to generate knowledge such as pedagogical projects. According to what is established by the Ministry of Education & United Nations Population Fund Program (2008), these projects for sexuality have some characteristics: they must be participatory processes, that is, involve the entire educational community (teachers, directors, students, parents); they must be transversal, that is, impact the entire life of the educational institution; and start from everyday situations that become pedagogical opportunities for the development of competencies in the construction of a life project.

An ecological education of functional and meaningful sexuality is fundamental taking into account the ecological paradigm, as an integral process that prepares the human being for life and allows him/her to learn to be a sexed being, to personalize his/her sexuality, to develop his/her masculinity and femininity free of stereotypes and prejudices. This implies that he should appropriate new values, more flexible attitudes, deep knowledge about sexuality and sexuality, skills and personal resources that prepare him for the encounter with his sexuality and that of others, for the development of full and



responsible sexuality based on the principle of guaranteeing human protagonism in harmony with his self and, in turn, with his environment, assuming responsibility for each of his acts.

The ecological paradigm of teaching leads to a classroom that is considered as a communicative medium through the interactions between teachers and students. Other types of interactions are also established with the school, the family, the community, the environment, influenced by the curriculum, the media, especially social networks. Therefore, it is concluded that an ecological sexuality education should start from the recognition of sexuality for a harmonious life and its influence in the processes of individual and social development, in the training to develop self-esteem, to give and receive love, to feel pleasure and in the responsible and respectful procreation of life as a couple, seeking the prevention of problems related to sexuality and the overcoming of these problems in those who for some circumstance have suffered them.

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