

FACILITATING CLASSROOM DIALOGUE IN SEXUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH GAME–BASED LEARNING AND GENAI

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Abstract

The purpose of this workshop is to explore how the content of human-to-human interactions compares to human-to-GenAI interactions, in the context of facilitating dialogue on topics related to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). CSE varies greatly between countries but generally fails to connect meaningfully to pupils' lived experiences. We introduce a new educational tool – the SexEdTalk card game – that facilitates open and age-appropriate conversations about sexuality in a safe, scientifically grounded, yet playful way. The game aims to foster: i) knowledge about sexual topics; ii) mutual understanding, respect, and empathy; and iii) insights into ideologically normative constructs and their consequences. It includes four decks: “Let’s find out”, 40 questions and answers; “Situations”, 30 hypothetical experiences to discuss how to help or overcome difficulties; “True or False”, 40 sentences to dismantle sexual myths; and “Let’s talk about...”, 10 keywords on specific topics often avoided. Because young people nowadays often turn to GenAI chatbots for advice on sexual topics, ChatGPT is introduced in the workshop as a virtual interlocutor. ChatGPT’s answers and feedback will then be compared to those of the workshop participants and evaluated regarding: i) factual correctness; ii) social awareness and empathy; and iii) embedded ideological constraints or constructs. Based on these findings, participants will reflect on the broader pedagogical and ethical implications of using a GenAI tool as a persona to spark, moderate, or enrich class discussions. The workshop is designed for teachers working with students aged 14 and over and will include a maximum of 20 participants.

Keywords: *Sexuality, card game, ChatGPT, educational tool, teachers.*

1. Introduction

Sexuality Education (SE) is defined as a lifelong learning process and a right since early childhood (UNESCO, 2018; WHO & BZgA, 2010), supporting healthy development and preventing abuse (Bruno, 2024; Putri, 2022; Schneider & Hirsch, 2020). A comprehensive SE (CSE) aims to challenge the stereotype that sexuality is equal to sexual intercourse including topics related to sexual rights, sexual identities, emotions, consent, respect, body development, and healthy behavior to promote knowledge, increase skills, and foster positive attitudes toward all sexualities; moreover, it aims to adapt the contents to the different students' ages and to the individual's development to guide people in their sexual exploration and to provide a safe and healthy approach to their own and others' sexuality (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021; Hawkins, 2024; Jiménez-Ríos et al, 2023). The CSE's preferred setting is the school environment, where it shares educational responsibility with families; however, only a few countries have laws supporting CSE in schools, leading to inadequate knowledge and the perpetuation of cultural false myths about sexuality (IPPF, 2018; UNESCO, 2023). In-service teachers perceived a lack of knowledge, strategies and educational tools regarding sexual topics, along with discomfort when facing students' questions or problematic situations (Ang & Lee, 2017; Bruno et al., 2024; Klein, 2021).

While for some CSE means teaching sensitive and challenging topics, for many it is necessary to develop crucial skills for daily life. CSE has three objectives: to increase and improve knowledge and skills, enabling recipients to apply their knowledge, and finally, to foster positive attitudes. Although CSE should align with sexual development, the earlier the start, the better the results (Advocates for Youth, 2009), there is a common belief that adolescence is a more suitable age for discussing sexual topics. Teachers consider adolescence the most feasible and accessible period to address CSE, provide support for first sexual

experiences, and prevent risks (Cortina-Lopez et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2019). This leads to CSE's implementation more frequently in middle or high schools and to engage in discussions on sexual topics with adolescents or after puberty (Johnson-Motoyama et al., 2016; Joseph et al., 2021).

In the present work, sexuality is considered an integral part of life experience, considering all its aspects – sociocultural, moral, ethical, psychological, emotional, and biological – that can influence and be influenced by personal beliefs, experiences, and life context (WHO & BZgA, 2010). Acknowledging the difficulties of teachers, but also parents and whoever would like to address CSE topics that suffer a lack of shareable guidelines and materials, a game was developed for adolescents – the SexEdTalk card game – to support the communication and education on sexual topics based on the importance of discussing them in an open, playful and interactive context (Alencar et al., 2022; Fioretti, 2023; Hoyle & McGeeney, 2020).

2. Game design

The first and second authors designed the SexEdTalk card game to help people who wish to address CSE topics with people aged 14 and over. The card game includes 121 cards: specifically, one for simple game instructions and then four decks to respond to different goals. The first deck is called “Let’s find out” and contains 40 cards with questions and answers in terms of information on CSE topics to increase scientific and accurate knowledge; following, there is the “Situations” deck, including 30 cards on hypothetical experiences – personal or of others – to discuss what someone could do to help or overcome difficulties and to help develop awareness, skills and positive attitudes. The third deck is for acknowledging the personal and cultural false myths on sexuality: the “True or False” deck includes 40 direct sentences to assess the knowledge or the presence of sexual false myths. Finally, there is the “Let’s talk about” deck, which comprises 10 keywords to include specific topics often avoided and to let people know about them. Each deck is designed to invite open and honest communication, and each card provides a scientific answer to help facilitate the discussion or offer final feedback.

3. Workshop objectives

The SexEdTalk card game was designed in Italian and then translated into English to test its effectiveness during the workshop, specifically regarding participants’ reflection on and discussion of their knowledge and opinions. Furthermore, the workshop aims to examine the contribution of ChatGPT, as such chatbots have become one of the main conversation partners for young people on topics related to sexuality. While these chatbots – detached as they are from any real and direct social context – may offer a seemingly “safe” space for asking questions about sensitive issues, it remains unclear to which extent they function as empathetic, constructive and error-checking interlocutors. Given their documented inclination for sycophancy, chatbots may allow potentially harmful notions to go unchallenged. Also, their equally well-documented training biases may have them confirm rather than question ideologically normative constructs of sexuality. Therefore, this workshop aims to investigate i) the factual correctness of ChatGPT’s answers; ii) its social awareness and capacity for empathy; and iii) potential ideological constraints.

4. Approach

Participants will be asked to reflect on the topics, their knowledge and the game’s pros and cons. Furthermore, they will be asked to select some cards and check how ChatGPT answers, considering whether the answer is correct or not, and taking notes on any eventual questions, doubts, or thoughts on how they would like to continue the conversation with other people, students and ChatGPT. Finally, by critically discussing the correctness of ChatGPT answers, the workshop would open to an active sharing moment of opinions and thoughts on ChatGPT’s usefulness as a moderator or active participant in the discussion.

5. Conclusion

While no definitive conclusions can yet be drawn, this work in progress suggests that combining participatory gameplay with the critical use of ChatGPT may open new possibilities – and questions – for engaging GenAI tools in sexuality education.

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