



Whose knowledge? Whose decision?: Young People, Sexual Knowledge, Curriculum, Parents and Teachers

Dr. Tania Ferfolja, Mr. Anthony Vassallo, and Dr. Jacqueline Ullman
School of Education, University of Western Sydney

October 9, 2014



Dr. Tania Ferfolja

LGBTI Knowledges as Minefield: Community
Voices and Curriculum

Organisation Name	Type (ACARA-defined)	Location
Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER)	Teacher Professional Organisation	National
Asia Education Foundation (AEF)	Education Stakeholder	Victoria
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO)	Health Stakeholder	National
Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)	Government Department	National
Australian Youth Forum (AYF)	Youth Organisation	National
Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)	Health Stakeholder	National
Board of Studies, New South Wales (BOS)	Education Authority	NSW
Family Planning Victoria (FPV)	Health Stakeholder	Victoria
Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (GLRL)	LGBTI Stakeholders	National
Hepatitis Australia	Health Stakeholder	National
National LGBTI Health Alliance	Health Stakeholder	National
New South Wales Anti-Homophobia Interagency (NSW AHI)	Health Stakeholder	NSW
Outdoor Education Australia (OEA)	Teacher Professional Association	National
Public Health Association Australia (PHAA)	Health Stakeholder	National
Queensland Studies Authority (QSA)	Education Authority	Queensland
Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)	Education Authority	Victoria
Women's Health Victoria (WHV)	Health Stakeholder	Victoria



Findings from analysis of submissions



- Specific inclusion of LGBTI-related content
 - Comprehensive sex education
 - Anti-discrimination education
 - Broader impact than on the individual subject

Need for specific articulation of LGBTI related content for teachers



- Danger of ambiguous and vague language
- Specific guidance required
- “We agree with ACARA that teachers are pivotal to successful curriculum change, as has been documented in research on LGBTI inclusion efforts in schools... Given that ... studies have documented harassment and discrimination by teachers, we believe that *specifying LGBTI inclusion throughout the proposed F-10 curriculum is needed to provide teachers with adequate guidance for its implementation* and thus enhance the physical activity participation and health and wellbeing of all LGBTI students” (emphasis added, The National LGBTI Health Alliance, March 2012, 2).



Whose rights

?

Publications for further reference



- Ferfolja, T. & Ullman, J. (2014). Opportunity lost and (re) written out: LGBTI content in Australia's 'new' national Health and Physical Education curriculum in S. Gannon & W. Sawyer (Eds). *Contemporary Issues of Equity in Education*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Ullman, J. & Ferfolja, T. (2014). Bureaucratic constructions of sexual diversity: 'sensitive', 'controversial' and silencing. *Teaching Education*, (ahead-of-print), 1-15

Mr. Anthony Vassallo

An analysis of current and experienced Health and Physical education teachers' interpretations of sexuality education in the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education



TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE?



Influences of Curriculum

"If it's not something they're comfortable with, they're going to teach the minimum they have to"

- Teachers were comfortable with topics explicitly included in the curriculum, such as: sex education, reproduction and contraception. However, failed to connect these topics to LGBTI young people. Further, they held reservations regarding topics not explicitly include in the curriculum.



Visibility

- Five out of the six teachers indicated they had used LGBTIQ inclusive material or at minimum sighted LGBTIQ inclusive material within their schools.
- Teachers indicated LGBTIQ content was not visible or appropriate until later secondary.
- Teachers discussed opportunities for increased visibility in other key learning areas and possibilities for school-based programs..

TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE?



Barriers

- Lack of detailed curriculum mandating content
- School ethos
- Crowded & diverse curriculum
- *"It was assumed knowledge as we have all been through puberty"*
- *"Even if you were to teach it in school, they would still sort of black it out because it's not accepted in the culture and in that society where they live"*



Changes Across the Career Span

Early career teachers often envisioned or implemented these topics in isolation from other topics, where as experienced teachers had a more integrated approach to sexuality education.

- All teachers recognised the need for better preparation through pre-service teacher training and professional development.
- *"I think there needs to be more. That's one part of it. I think professional development, and ongoing professional development with teachers ..."*

SUMMARY



The key points I have discussed today include:

- The increased visibility of LGBTIQ in the senior curriculum, and the challenges/concerns associated with this.
- Teacher's perceptions of culture as a barrier preventing the representation of LGBTIQ subjectivities in school-based education
- The key differences between early career and experienced teachers and the potential impacts for pre-service teacher training and professional development over the next decade.

Dr. Jacqueline Ullman

The Elephant in the (Class)Room Project
(with Dr. Tania Ferfolja):
Parents' perceptions regarding LGBTIQI-inclusive education, K-12



Parents' Perceptions:



“When it comes to anything to do with sexuality and kids, people run screaming. So I think you have a huge problem that they [*educators*] don’t even cope with straight, monogamous sex very well so the chances of asking them to go outside of their own experience or what’s, you know, couched as ‘socially acceptable’ is **just terrifying**. I think and there’s a lot of **moral panic about the sexualisation of children** and that kind of thing which makes life even more complicated. So I think that’s probably a huge part of the problem.”

[Inner West Mum of 3 primary aged kids]

Parents' Perceptions:



It’s a hard issue and people are like, “Well *is he gay?*” and it’s like, “Does it matter?” When I went to the principal after the first week he said, “Well, **that’s just boys being boys**”. That was his response...We have put in an official complaint against a [PE] teacher that has really been giving him a hard time in front of other peers.

[Sutherland Shire Mum of 3 sons – primary & secondary school aged]

Parents' Perceptions:



P2: I think there is a role for parents, but I think at school there is a role for individual teachers that they are closer to, that they go and ask them but I think it’s a different thing though. I just don’t know how you are going to get a...I think it would be difficult to get a taxpayer funded person on the school grounds **promoting certain values**.

P1: See that’s where you’re saying promoting. We’re just **wanting them to be educated**. They’re not promoting it. They’re not encouraging them to follow that path, they’re just accepting.

[Hills District (#1) conversation btwn. Father of primary children and Mother of primary & secondary aged kids]

Parents' Perceptions:



“We must make it [*same-sex attraction and gender diversity*] normal and that’s the biggest thing. **We have to normalise it, and that’s not going to come from every child’s parents**. Can we just start saying its normal once you get to primary school? Great, if we can do it in a **very comfortable mode, in a way that’s not shocking to parents, or anybody else, and be very good about teaching teachers how say it**, how to say it well, and picking up kids who are using terminology that really does discriminate.”

[Hills District (#2) Mum of 2 primary aged kids]

Parents' Perceptions:



“The Board of Studies **could position themselves as a leader for social justice** for the state, they **could update policies** that haven’t been looked at for 15, 20 years, they **could actually integrate these issues into the curriculum** so when a teacher teaches a novel and parents say, ‘Oh, why are you doing this?’, then the teacher can say, ‘Well, this is...part of the NSW Stage 6 syllabus and I’ve chosen to integrate this because the topic is discovery, the current one is belonging. You can see the links between discovery, belonging and sexuality—they are really natural fits’.

...When talking about change, what can happen in schools, and what needs to go on, **it really has to happen at policy level.**”

[Inner West Mum of secondary school boy]