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New foundations: school “ethos” and LGBT sexualities: summary report

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**New Foundations:
School “Ethos” and LGBT Sexualities
Summary Report**

University of Limerick

17th May 2013

Editors:

Aoife Neary, Breda Gray, Mary O’ Sullivan

New Foundations: School “Ethos” and LGBT Sexualities took place on the 17th of May 2013 at the University of Limerick. For further information about this conference or to join the New Foundations network please contact: Aoife Neary, Department of Sociology, University of Limerick aoife.neary@ul.ie.

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Professor Mary O’ Sullivan is Dean of the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences at UL and co-director of the Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport (PE PAYS) Research Centre.

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Foreword

Dr Pam Alldred

Convenor of the British Educational Research Association (BERA)

Sexualities Special Interest Group

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) is very happy to be supporting this event. Bringing together international perspectives on sexualities equalities in schools is a great way to mark International Day Against Homophobia 2013.

BERA is a membership organization for researchers concerned in some way with education. It has 29 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) - one of which is the Sexualities SIG - members of which have a keen focus on sexualities equality in schools, colleges, universities etc. and on Relationships and Sexualities Education or SRE as it's called in the UK. BERA welcomes international members and members get a discount at the annual conference and other events and can join as many SIGs as they like. The Sexualities SIG is currently co-convened by Dr Fiona Cullen and myself and we are both based in the Centre for Youth Work Studies in the Social Work Division at Brunel University in West London.

The seed of the idea for *New Foundations: School "Ethos" and LGBT Sexualities* was planted at our SIG meeting at the BERA Annual Conference in September 2012. In that meeting, Irish, Australian, Norwegian, British and North American researchers shared similar concerns about the way in which equalities legislation operated in practice, particularly sexualities equality legislation regarding opt-outs on the grounds of faith. Aoife Neary took forward the idea, developed this event and managed to secure funding from the Irish Research Council while we, in the BERA Sexualities SIG, procured some funds available from BERA for international events.

Congratulations to Aoife, Breda and Mary on getting together a wonderful programme. I am very excited about all the papers and about the wonderful speakers you have lined up and the participants you have managed to bring together for this event. Here's to one day our concerns, and International Day Against Homophobia, being irrelevant and superfluous!

Introduction

Dr Breda Gray

Director of Programmes in Gender, Culture & Society,
Department of Sociology, University of Limerick

On behalf of Aoife Neary (whose brainchild this event is and who has done so much work to frame and organise today) and Professor Mary O’Sullivan, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences and myself, I would like to welcome you to this Irish Research Council New Foundations Conference on School “Ethos” and LGBT Sexualities.

Today’s conference provides a very important opportunity for addressing what is sometimes characterised as the uncomfortable relationship between sexuality and schooling in Ireland. Indeed, the Irish education system has played a central role in policing and reproducing norms of heterosexuality. This is done through everyday practices of silence, non-recognition and misrepresentation that impact on both LGBT students and teachers (O’ Higgins-Norman 2009; Neary, 2012).

The related question of religious ‘ethos’ and its significance in considering sexuality in Irish schools is particularly pertinent one in this country where 92% of primary schools and 49% of second-level schools are under Catholic patronage. The implications are many. For example, Catholic Church teaching on homosexuality as a ‘moral disorder’ contributes to fear, caution and anxiety for gay and lesbian teachers and produces burdensome forms of privatisation and personalised responsibility.

It is also the case that the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is shaped by the ‘ethos’ or ‘characteristic spirit’ of the school. For the majority of primary school pre-service teachers, Relationships and Sexuality Education is taught within faith-based institutions. Moreover, the majority of second-level teachers do not receive formal training in RSE in their ITE programmes (Mayock et al., 2007).

The Education Act, the Equal Status Act and the Employment Equality Act each give considerable weight to the role of 'ethos' in shaping school life, in ways that are at odds with anti-discrimination legislation (McNamara and Norman, 2010). While these provisions privilege school 'ethos' above equality, some changes are afoot. The current Minister for Education has made the establishment of multi-denominational and non-denominational national schools a priority. However, a government advisory group on patronage and pluralism later advised a more gradualist approach than he had envisaged. Recently, a Department of Education survey of parents in 38 districts found a demand for alternative patronage in 23 instances. As such, the question of school ethos is very much in the news.

Indeed, the combination of these factors makes this a unique moment to observe the relationship between 'ethos' and LGBT sexualities in the Irish education system.

Conference Aims

The aims of the conference were:

- To explore the concept of ‘ethos’ and how it works in the context of schooling at primary and second-level level in Ireland.
- To examine the relationship between ‘ethos’ and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) sexualities in schools.
- To bring together a range of stakeholders including -

national and international academics and doctoral students in various research fields such as Education, Sexualities, Sex Education, Teacher Education, Sociology and Social Policy, Psychology, representatives from religious organisations, LGBT community and advocacy groups, the Department of Education and Skills, the Central Policy Unit and policy development, primary and second-level school management bodies, the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation, primary and second-level parents’ associations, school guidance counselling associations, school principals’ networks, teachers, pre-service teachers and Initial Teacher Education practitioners in Ireland


- To provide an opportunity for dialogue between stakeholders across communities, the sharing of current research and ideas and to sow the seeds for future research and collaborations.

Acknowledgement of Support

This conference was funded by the Irish Research Council New Foundations scheme and is in association with the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Sexualities Special Interest Group (SIG). It was joint-hosted by Gender, Culture & Society@UL in the Department of Sociology and the Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport (PEPAYS) Research Centre.

Many thanks to our partners:

 <p>IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn</p>	<p>Many thanks to the Irish Research Council (IRC) who funded this event. The IRC is a sub-board of the Higher Education Authority. It delivers enhanced opportunities and benefits to Irish-based researchers and enables the Irish research community to contribute to the body of global knowledge across a range of disciplines, recognising the importance of research and scholarship for all aspects of social, cultural and economic development. www.research.ie.</p>
 <p>UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK Ollscoil Luimnigh</p>	<p>Many thanks to Robert Hutchinson and Shane Real, Faculty of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences audio visual/technical support. Many thanks to Niall Collins, Graduate Entry Medical School (GEMS) audio visual/video-conferencing support.</p>
 <p>BERA BRITISH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION</p>	<p>Many thanks to Dr Pam Alldred, Dr Fiona Cullen and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) www.bera.ac.uk. The BERA Sexualities SIG provides a forum for educators and researchers with interest in sexualities in the context of education to discuss theory, policy and practice issues www.bera.ac.uk/sigs/info/sexualities.</p>
 <p>Gender Culture & Society @UL</p>	<p>Many thanks to Gender Culture & Society @UL. At UL we offer challenging courses addressing the intersections of gender, ‘race’, class, age, ability and sexuality in society, popular culture, literature, history and politics. www3.ul.ie/gcs/</p>

	<p>Many thanks to the Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport (PEPAYS) Research Centre. PEPAYS is committed to the advancement of the physical and social wellbeing of Irish children and youth through the creation and dissemination of knowledge on physical education, physical activity, and youth sport that informs policy and practice.</p> <p>www.ul.ie/pepays.</p>
	<p>Many thanks to Gender ARC (Advanced Research Consortium on Gender, Culture and the Knowledge Society). This is a research network linking more than fifty academics at the National University of Ireland, Galway and the University of Limerick who are engaged in gender-focused research.</p> <p>www.genderarc.org.</p>
	<p>Many thanks to Sandra Irwin-Gowran, Brian Sheehan and Odhrán Allen of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN). GLEN is a policy and strategy focused NGO which aims to deliver ambitious and positive change for lesbian, gay and bisexual people (LGB) in Ireland, ensuring full equality, inclusion and protection from all forms of discrimination.</p> <p>www.glen.ie.</p>
	<p>Many thanks to Michael Barron and Carol-Anne O'Brien of BeLonGTo. BeLonGTo is an organisation that provides safe and fun services for LGBT young people aged between 14 and 23 across Ireland. It provides advocacy and a campaigning voice so that society respects LGBT young people as full and valued members of society</p> <p>www.belongto.org.</p>

A sincere thank you to:

The chairs: Dr Pam Alldred, Professor Marie Parker-Jenkins and Professor Mary O' Sullivan.

The group facilitators: Carol-Anne O' Brien, Odhrán Allen, Padraig Flanagan, Martha Sweeney and Dr Patricia Mannix-McNamara.

The conference volunteers: Aisling O' Connor, Ann-Marie Joyce and Leanne Coll.

Conference Overview

The Pavilion	Registration and Tea/Coffee
GEMS 0029	<p>Welcome/Introduction: Dr Breda Gray, University of Limerick</p> <p>Foreword: Dr Pam Alldred Convenor of British Educational Research Association Sexualities SIG</p>
GEMS 0029	<p><u>Session 1: School ‘Ethos’ and LGBT Sexualities: The Irish Context</u></p> <p>Chair: Dr Pam Alldred</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Valuing Visibility? An exploration of the construction of school ethos to enable or prevent recognition of sexual identities</i></p> <p>Dr Anne Lodge, Church of Ireland College of Education <i>Secular Imaginings and the future of Relationships and Sexuality Education</i></p> <p>Dr Mary Lou Rasmussen, Monash University, Australia (via video-conference)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Homophobia and Heterosexism in Schools in Ireland</i> Dr Stephen Minton, Trinity College Dublin</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Primary and Post Primary Schools</i> Martha Sweeney, SPHE Support Service</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>LGBT Teachers’ Negotiations of Schools in Ireland</i> Aoife Neary, University of Limerick</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ethos and Schooling: A Religious Perspective</i> Michael Redmond, Joint Managerial Body of Voluntary Secondary Schools</p>
Pavilion	Tea/Coffee/Refreshments

The Pavilion	<p><u>Session 2: What insights can research in other contexts offer to this topic?</u></p> <p>Chair: Professor Marie Parker-Jenkins</p> <p><i>Claiming a space for LGBT within a social justice agenda for schools</i> Dr Renée DePalma, University of A Coruña, Spain</p> <p><i>Equality Now? "Post-Homophobia" and its Discontents</i> Professor Debbie Epstein, Cardiff University, Wales</p>
Pavilion	Lunch
The Pavilion	<p><u>Session 3: World Café (20 minute conversations on each topic—facilitators will rotate)</u></p> <p>Topic 1: LGBT students and students of same-sex families Group Facilitator: Carol-Anne O’ Brien, BeLonGTo</p> <p>Topic 2: LGBT Teachers Group Facilitator: Odhrán Allen, Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN)</p> <p>Topic 3: School Policy and Management Group Facilitator: Pdraig Flanagan, Principal of Castletroy College, Limerick and VP of NAPD</p> <p>Topic 4: Curriculum and Teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Group Facilitator: Martha Sweeney, SPHE Support Service</p> <p>Topic 5: Teacher Education and Pre-service Teachers Group Facilitator: Dr Patricia Mannix McNamara, Education and Professional Studies, UL</p>
Pavilion	Tea/Coffee/Refreshments
The Pavilion	<p><u>Session 4: Key Insights and Future Directions</u></p> <p>Chair: Professor Mary O’ Sullivan</p> <p>This summary discussion will be structured by feedback from the World Café Group Facilitators</p>
The Pavilion	<p>Closing</p> <p>Aoife Neary</p>

School 'Ethos' and LGBT Sexualities: The Irish Context

The following papers were presented in the first session of the conference and deal primarily with the Irish context.

Valuing Visibility? An exploration of the construction of school ethos to enable or prevent recognition of sexual identities

Dr Anne Lodge

Church of Ireland College of Education, Ireland

Abstract

The Valuing Visibility study was an action research project that set out to identify inclusive, positive practice in Irish post-primary schools recognising the diversity of sexual identities and relationships that exist within the school community as well as examining perceived barriers to such practices. This paper explores the nature of the partnership relationships established between an academic institution, an advocacy agency, a funding body, post-primary schools and key education stakeholders which enabled this project. It considers the limited willingness expressed by the majority of education stakeholders to take a leadership role in this issue and the particular challenges posed by a minority of negative voices. The Valuing Visibility project found that most participating schools were struggling to positively address the misrecognition of sexual identities in their institutions and that 'ethos' was perceived as being at the centre of such contestation. 'Ethos' at its simplest is habitat and offers shape to the life of a school formed and sustained by specific values which provide opportunities to proof how people behave towards one another, how they exercise responsibility in community and form opinion with integrity. This paper explores understandings of ethos and how different understandings of school habitat can be utilised to silence difference or facilitate dialogue and recognition of sexual identities.

Introduction

This summary paper draws on the findings of the *Valuing Visibility* research project (Lodge, Gowran and O'Shea 2011) involving senior personnel in Irish post-primary schools and stakeholder bodies. It explores understandings of school ethos that emerged in this research as potential enabler or inhibitor of respect for diverse sexual identities in educational contexts. The summary paper briefly explores the concept of ethos. It then presents an overview of the *Valuing Visibility* research, with a particular focus on its findings with regard to school ethos. It concludes with a brief

discussion of the challenge to inclusion and respect for difference presented by the lack of clarity around the notion of 'ethos' in the context of Irish schools.

Defining 'Ethos'

The concept of ethos is rooted in the idea of habitat, a space of safety where creatures can live and make community. The concept of institutional ethos is both underpinned by, and also informs, specific values lived out in practice in a shared communal space. Such lived ethos is dynamic and is both shared and contested. In the context of Irish education, Lodge and Jackson (2013) argue that ethos has tended to be a tired paradigm, one that focuses on the preservation of segregated dualities. In reality however, lived ethos evolves and may not correlate with a calcified understanding of ethos as containment or maintenance. The concept of ethos has been used in an Irish service-provision context as a means of delineating and containing difference, and this was actively supported by public policy.

Because it has been used in this way to delineate and contain difference, the concept of ethos presents faith schools with a fundamental contradiction. Gospel values of welcome and inclusion are intended to be at the core of the cultures of schools and other institutions describing themselves as Christian. The international experience for Christian churches indicates a fundamental contradiction between a focus on equality and justice on the one hand and a formal endorsement of heteronormativity (and at best a resultant exclusion and sidelining of homosexuality) on the other hand. Within faith schools and other religious contexts there has been a tendency to locate pastoral support for those who are gay, lesbian or bisexual in a tragedy or deficit model rather than operating out of an assumption of equality and respect.

Ideally, the culture or ethos of schools styling themselves as Christian should be characterised by core Gospel values such as altruism, compassion, hospitality, creativity and dialogue. Such schools should provide their students with opportunities for self-knowledge of themselves as individuals and as members of specific communities. They should also foster opportunities for knowledge of, and respect for, a variety of different identities. In such creative spaces, young people's potential to educate the adults working with them should be facilitated through the opening up of

intergenerational dialogue and structured, supported engagement with those marginalised and excluded.

The findings of the *Valuing Visibility* research project indicate that there is little in-depth understanding of the concept of ethos in educational terms. It was clear that the creative potential of ethos outlined in the preceding paragraph is not typically being harnessed to challenge homophobia. The project reported uncertainty and discomfort by senior school personnel and education stakeholders with regard to recognition of the identities of young people, parents or teachers who were gay, lesbian or bisexual within the context of a post-primary school setting or curriculum. The project found that the concept of ethos has been used as a mechanism for silencing discussion and recognition of sexual orientation and the discomfort to which this topic can give rise. It has been used as a means of avoidance of the embarrassment associated with controversial topics such as sexual orientation, a mechanism to avoid conflict and as a way of deflecting attention from an absence of expertise.

Valuing Visibility: project summary and key findings

The Valuing Visibility study was an action research project that set out to identify inclusive, positive practice in Irish post-primary schools recognising the diversity of sexual identities and relationships that exist within a school community as well as identifying and exploring the perceived barriers to such practices. The project was transformative in intention and actively advocated for change, in particular with the discussion that the project leaders held with key education stakeholders. It was collaborative on a number of levels – the project was co-led by a university-based academic and a senior staff member of an advocacy agency. It involved multiple partnerships between the two lead institutions, the Department of Education and Skills which funded it, a range of post-primary school personnel and key education stakeholders. Data was gathered over a one year period using interviews, focus groups and a consultative seminar. The project was partly shaped in dialogue with LGB support groups who subsequently dialogued with education stakeholders in the final consultative seminar.

The original intention was to document and share positive, inclusive practice in post-primary schools vis-à-vis the recognition of lesbian, gay and bisexual students, teachers, parents and other members of the school

community. However, the majority of the schools who volunteered to participate in the project did so because they were seeking guidance in order to improve their practice in this regard. A core finding of the project was that most participating schools were struggling to positively address the misrecognition of sexual identities in their institutions and that ‘ethos’ was perceived as being at the centre of such contestation. Indeed, many of the fifteen participating schools who were represented by senior personnel in all cases, noted that they took part in order to seek guidance and to enhance their own limited understanding of sexuality and to inform themselves professionally with regard to the issues facing young people who are LGB. They were concerned both about the views and influence of school boards of management, patrons and parents. They were unclear as to how they could uphold school ethos and at the same time fully include and support students who are LGB. Interestingly the concern about school ethos and parental views was every bit as strong in State-run schools under Vocational Educational Committee management as it was in faith schools under religious patronage.

The project found that there was limited evidence of positive practices in the participating schools that recognised and included the diversity of sexual identities and relationships. Where positive practices were identified, these were particularly focused on the provision of support for vulnerable LGB students, especially in the area of challenging homophobic bullying. The two-fold difficulty about this finding is firstly that it replicates the tendency to operate out of a tragedy / deficit model vis-à-vis homosexual orientation and secondly that such practices tend to reflect individual rather than institutional commitment to inclusion.

A further core finding of the project was that there was limited willingness expressed by the majority of education stakeholders to take a leadership role in this issue and the particular challenges posed by a minority of negative voices. Education stakeholders consulted included management bodies, advisory bodies, teacher unions, parent bodies and the Department of Education and Skills. Stakeholders were generally both aware of, and concerned about, homophobic bullying in schools, the limited understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation in post-primary schools, among education professionals and in Irish society more widely. All stakeholders felt that reactionary individuals and groups at both local and national level negatively impacted on the ability of schools to act positively and inclusively. Various stakeholder bodies identified other stakeholder

bodies as having a key role to play in addressing the silence and confusion, e.g. the management bodies believed that the parent bodies and Department of Education and Skills should take a leadership role in this regard while the Department believed that the management and parent bodies had a key role to play. It emerged from this research that no organization was prepared to take on a leadership role without equal and active engagement by other stakeholders.

Concluding comments – ‘ethos’ as scapegoat

Most participating senior school personnel and representatives of education stakeholder bodies consulted in the *Valuing Visibility* project expressed the view that school ethos was one of the primary locations of the confusion and silence with regard to sexual diversity in post-primary schools in Ireland. Our analysis of their inputs demonstrated that there was limited understanding of what school ethos actually meant in practice. This is hardly surprising; the Education Act (1998) 15, (2)(b) itself offers little guidance in this regard, referring to ethos as “the characteristic spirit of a school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of a school”. What emerged from the study was that teachers and other school personnel as well as a variety of education stakeholders sensed that school ethos operated as a key blocking mechanism inhibiting change with regard to policy and practice vis-à-vis the recognition of diverse sexualities in Irish post-primary schools. The uncertainty of school personnel and Boards with regard to their legal obligations to uphold school ethos led to inaction. The uncertainty expressed by the various education stakeholder bodies with regard to who should and could take leadership in this regard further facilitated inaction and paralysis.

Without doubt it is essential that the rights of those who are GLB are protected and upheld in schools. However there is a lack of clarity about the fundamental meaning of school ethos and a further lack of clarity about how the rights of patrons and management bodies to uphold an ethos, and the right of veto by parents in respect of sexual and moral issues. This lack of clarity leads to further uncertainty as to how these rights can be balanced against the rights of those members of the school community who are GLB to equal recognition, support and inclusion. ‘Ethos’ itself however, is a very handy scapegoat in this ongoing situation of inaction – I would argue

that it is, at present, being used as a kind of invisibility cloak by a variety of powerful stakeholder bodies none of which seem willing to take a leadership stance to address the problems documented by a range of national and international researchers and advocates and expressed at this conference and a range of other similar events.

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Lodge, A. and Jackson, M. (2013) 'Altruism or Containment: Interrogating the potential and limitation of educational ethos in changing times' Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland, Limerick, 21st – 23rd March 2013.

Dr Anne Lodge is Principal of the Church of Ireland College of Education. She writes and researches on a range of equality issues in education and on religious identities and institutional ethos. She co-authored a study on recognition of sexual orientation in Irish post-primary schools with Sandra Irwin-Gowran and Karen O'Shea.

Secular Imaginings and the future of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Dr Mary Lou Rasmussen

Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia

Abstract

Elizabeth Kiely (2005) draws on the early work of Michelle Fine to argue for a greater emphasis on pleasure and desire in the Irish context. The absence of pleasure and desire in the Irish RSE curriculum documents is attributed by Kiely (2005) as an accommodation to Irish Catholics who strongly opposed a movement away from the “strict Catholic moral teaching on right and wrong, which dominated the Irish sex education discourse in times past” (261) (My emphasis). Kiely contrasts this vision of RSE with an “RSE programme [that] does not aggressively impose moral precepts on students. It seeks instead to make up subjects capable of exercising responsibility and self-care broadly in keeping with the kind of liberal, individualist, lifestyle project advocated in RSE”(261). In Kiely’s analysis it is possible to see the production of a particular narrative within sexuality education whereby secular discourses are constructed as temporally in advance of religious discourse. Kiely’s forward looking RSE program is briefly analyzed through the frame of secularism (Taylor; Butler, Scott). I turn to a consideration of how REENA (Religious, Ethics and Education Network, Australia) endeavors to construct a space for religion in public schools in Australia that “develop[s] a critical approach to ... philosophical, religious, social, political and cultural concepts”. This seems to provide something of a compromise for the future of RSE because it contains a religious element but is not didactic and may assuage some of Kiely’s concerns (or not). I close with some imaginings of a different future for RSE that might embrace “liberal” and “critical” approaches alongside more didactic approaches.

Summary of Paper Presented

Australian Bureau of Statistics Data¹ from 2013 indicates that Government schools remain the main provider of school education in Australia, with a total of 2,342,379 students, compared with 736,595 students attending Catholic schools (20%) and 511,012 students attending independent schools (11%). Student numbers rose for all three affiliations between 2011 and 2012, but the Independent sector had the largest proportional increase in student numbers, 1.8%, which followed a similar rise, 1.9%, in the previous period (2010 to 2011). Between 2011 and 2012, the number of students attending Catholic and government schools rose by 1.7% and 1.2% respectively.

The Australian system is therefore quite distinct from the Irish context where primary schools are predominantly under the patronage of the Catholic Church. While the state provides for free primary education, schools are established by patron bodies who define the ethos of the school and appoint the board of management to run the school on a day-to-day basis. The vast majority (96%) of primary schools in Ireland are owned and under the patronage of religious denominations and approximately 90% of these schools are owned and under the patronage of the Catholic Church.

In secondary education “Voluntary Secondary Schools” (largely Catholic) educate approximately 54% of second level students in the Irish context. “Vocational and Community Colleges” educate approximately 30.4 %, and “Community and Comprehensive Schools” educate approximately 15.6% of all pupils. The 77 “Community Schools” in Ireland comprise less than 10% of the total number, are the nearest to what Australian’s would deem government schools in secondary education.²

Somewhat surprisingly, given the quite different make up of schooling in the two nations, second level Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

¹<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4221.0Main%20Features302012?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4221.0&issue=2012&num=&view> accessed 15 May, 2013.

² See <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Diversity-of-Patronage/> accessed 15 May, 2013.

curricula in Ireland are very similar to the Australian Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) curriculum in Years 9 & 10 (14 & 15 Year olds).

Textual Similarities:

- Language of inclusion (respect)
- Identity V. Orientation
- Similar goals at similar ages (no sex ed at senior level in Australia)
- Cultivate respectful relationships

Irish RSE Curriculum – Senior cycle (students aged 15-18)

- Students distinguish between sexual activity, sexuality and sexual orientation
- Students clarify their understanding of and comfort with different sexual orientations
- Students demonstrate how to relate respectfully to others of a different sexual orientation
- Students learn how to demonstrate genuineness, empathy and respect in different types of relationship scenarios

Australian Draft PDHPE Curriculum – End of compulsory schooling (students aged 14-15)

- Students explore the nature and benefits of meaningful and respectful relationships to develop skills to manage a range of relationships as they change over time.
- Students critically examine how a range of sociocultural and personal factors influence sexuality, gender identity, sexual attitudes and behaviour.
- They also develop an understanding of the role that empathy, ethical decision-making and personal safety play in maintaining respectful relationships.

In substance the two curricula have overlapped in their focus on empathy, inclusion and respect for others. They are both inclusive of sexual diversity, at least in content, though the capacity of teachers to incorporate such

content in practice appears to be somewhat constrained in both contexts due to teachers' concerns about the consequences of teaching topics they perceive as controversial.

In writing about the RSE curriculum in the Irish context Elizabeth Kiely draws on Inglis (1998) to argue that

...the programme does not deal with a number of sensitive topics, such as masturbation. It is also claimed that the definition of sex proposed in the RSE resource materials privileges a heterosexual identity and that the programme promotes a limited kind of sexual subjectivity, which obscures sexual pleasure and desire (Kiely 2005).

This critique of the Irish context would also hold true in the Australian context where sexuality education within the context of PDHPE is highly constrained in policy, curriculum and practice. While in some states (Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania) there is strong support from the state government for comprehensive sexuality education in state schools, delivery of the curriculum is inconsistent with research reporting that schools often overlook this curriculum area because of competing curriculum demands, teacher discomfort and lack of pre-service teacher education (Mitchell et al, 2011). So in the Australian context external providers often deliver sex education and many of these external providers have religious affiliations, though there are also providers who have no religious affiliation.

My point here is that it may be difficult to determine how much constraints placed on RSE can be attributed to the Catholic ethos. Similar constraints have been noted in Australia where government schools are still responsible for educating the majority of students (Mitchell et al, 2011). Even when some Australian states have shown very strong support for the development of more inclusive sexuality education curricula the delivery of sexuality education is reported to be patchy.

Over half of the teachers in the Australian study by Mitchell et al cited time constraints and exclusion from the curriculum as reasons for not covering a sexuality education topic. About a fifth of the teachers also named a lack of support in either training, resources or by management/policy as a reason for not teaching a topic. Just under fifty percent of teachers said that they

were careful about the topics they taught because of possible adverse community reactions while forty percent of teachers said that cultural religious values in the community influenced their teaching of sexuality education. (Mitchell et al, 2006).

In the Irish context the Catholic ethos is reported to contribute to teachers feeling constrained in teaching sexuality education. Aoife Neary draws on a number of contemporary studies to argue that

... the Irish education system has played a central role in policing and reproducing norms of (hetero) sexuality through practices of silence, non-recognition and misrepresentation that impact on both students and teachers (O'Carroll and Szalacha 2000; Lodge and Lynch 2004; O'Higgins-Norman 2004, 2009; O'Higgins-Norman, Galvin and McNamara 2006; Minton et al. 2008). (Neary, 2012: 2)

Neary goes on to note that “the Catholic church is central in considering sexuality in Irish schools (Inglis 1998) given its powerful ‘zone of influence’ in education (Lynch 1989, 131)” (2012: 3). I do not doubt that the Catholic ethos has had an impact on the production of sexuality education in the Irish context, but I do think that there is an argument for more rigorous international comparative research that attempts to determine the significance of this impact. In reading research on sexuality education across numerous country contexts (Australia, New Zealand, England, USA, Canada) my impression is that teachers’ experience of homophobia in education and their unwillingness to question normative heterosexuality and to challenge homophobia is a widespread phenomena that seems to persist in more secular societies such as Australia.

Elizabeth Kiely (2005) has also attributed the shaping of the curriculum in Ireland to the Catholic ethos. Drawing on the early work of Michelle Fine to argue for a greater emphasis on pleasure and desire in the Irish context. Kiely also notes a departure from the “strict Catholic moral teaching on right and wrong, *which dominated the Irish sex education discourse in times past*, the RSE programme does not aggressively impose moral precepts on students. It seeks instead to make up subjects capable of exercising responsibility and self-care broadly in keeping with the kind of liberal, individualist, lifestyle project advocated in RSE” (261) (My emphasis). In Kiely’s analysis it is possible to see the production of a

particular narrative within sexuality education whereby secular discourses are constructed as temporally in advance of religious discourse. Within such a narrative strict Catholic teaching is something that belongs in the past. Yet in the conclusion to her paper Kiely endorses the World Health Organization's definition of sexuality, a definition that is informed by religious, spiritual, and historical influences, presumably recognizing the role they play in the present.

While Kiely appears somewhat ambivalent about the role of religion in sexuality education, Benjamin Law, a popular and influential commentator on culture and sexuality, is more scathing. Based on his observations of sex education in Australian schools Law writes,

...a lot of the sex education in Australian schools is caught in a weird time-warp. A lot of it is anachronistic, inadequate and inconsistent. Three years ago, when doing my own research, I travelled and spoke with various Queensland organisations who offered sex ed classes across Queensland, Australian and the Pacific Islands. Some were dependable, thorough, independent, non-religious organisations like Family Planning. However, a huge number were religious groups who presented information that was ethically jaw-dropping.

In one presentation for Year 8 and 9 students, one middle-aged couple declared actor Scarlett Johansson was promiscuous (rather than, say, "responsible") for publicly declaring she had regular STI checks. They argued condoms were ineffective and "flimsy", and showed an American video lecture that urged women never to get abortions, even in the case of rape. Afterwards, they invited students - kids between the ages of 12 and 14 - to sign virginity pledges. (Law, 2012)

While I am sympathetic to Law and Kiely's observations about the role of religion in sexuality education, I also want to resist this style of critique. This is because I think it is desirable to craft future imaginings of sexuality education that might incorporate religious and secular perspectives, even when these religious perspectives incorporate moral perspectives that I find problematic or scientifically questionable.

I make this argument because many young people continue to have a religious influence in their lives and because religious and secular perspectives are ultimately inseparable – because they fundamentally inform each other. James Arthur and Michael Holdsworth, in their analysis of secular education and public schools in the European context note that “the secular, as a concept, only makes sense in relation to its counterpart, the religious’.” (Arthur & Holdsworth, 2012: 30). Though navigating the tensions between the religious and the secular is not straightforward in sexuality education.

I am arguing that sexualities education should seek to incorporate religious and cultural difference because it will be more robust and potentially engage more students/teachers/parents. I also think that there needs to be recognition of the secular politics of sexualities education – ***this is recognition that diverse religious and “progressive” perspectives on sexuality are contentious.*** Young people in high school can benefit from hearing diverse perspectives in their community when they are relevant to sexuality education. This is not an argument for discussion of any moral position within the context of RSE.

UNESCO’s International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (2009)

...stresses the need for cultural relevance and local adaptations, through engaging and building support among the custodians of culture in a given community. Key stakeholders, including religious leaders, must be involved in the development of what form sexuality education takes. However, the guidance also stresses the need to change social norms and harmful practices that are not in line with human rights and increase vulnerability and risk, especially for girls and young women. (2009: 8)

Developing a sexuality education that can adhere to the spirit of this guidance is a complex task. A rights based approach is also problematic as rights can be seen to be in competition within this domain where freedom of religion and freedom from discrimination can be opposed. Similarly, finding agreement within a community about how sexuality education might identify which social norms to change and which to classify as harmful is by no means straightforward.

Young people will be aware that there are competing truths related to sexuality, belief and practice – they are surely exposed to such complexities through participation in their communities. Along with Valerie Harwood I have argued the value of incorporating such complexities into the curriculum because “when truths are silenced, we are, even in our most earnest of endeavours, disturbing the very ground upon which critique can exercise its practice” (Harwood & Rasmussen, p.9). Young people share a capacity for critique and a strong resistance to being told how to think about sexuality, within and outside formal schooling contexts. The future of sexuality education will be enhanced by the incorporation and interrogation of difference in its religious and secular manifestations.

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Homophobia and Heterosexism in Schools in Ireland

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Abstract

Previous research has shown that homophobia and heterosexism are in evidence in schools in Ireland, largely via studies of how these are manifested in the phenomenon of homophobic bullying. It is argued that the distinction between 'heteronormative' bullying and '(presumed) sexual orientation-based' bullying should be borne in mind. This paper draws from two recent surveys on the relationship between sexual orientation and bullying behaviour, and homophobic bullying. In order to investigate the influence of the factors of age and gender in homophobic bullying behaviour, 475 fifth-year and 561 second-year students at six schools in the Republic of Ireland completed a study-specific questionnaire. No evidence of 'age-related declines' were found in reports of either bullying or homophobic bullying. Males were significantly more likely than females to report involvement (as both perpetrators and targets) in bullying in general, and homophobic bullying. Participants were more likely to report being perpetrators rather than targets of homophobic bullying. It is concluded from the data that senior cycle students, as well as junior cycle students, should be involved in anti-bullying interventions; that males should be especially focussed upon; and that programmes specific to anti-homophobic bullying, targeting pre-adolescent students, should be supported.

Introduction

We will examine this question by reference to how studies of homophobic bullying have shown that homophobia and heterosexism are in evidence in schools in Ireland. This necessarily short paper will include data from two empirical studies I have conducted on the relationship between sexual orientation and bullying in schools in the Republic of Ireland, and its implication for educational practice.

Bullying Behaviour

Bullying behaviour itself has been the subject of empirical research since the early 1970s (Olweus, 1999). It is usually conceptualized as being a *sub-type of aggressive behaviour*, differentiated on the basis of *repetition* (Olweus, 1993) and the existence of some form of *power imbalance*, in the perpetrator's favour, existing between the perpetrator and the target (Roland & Idsøe, 2001). Taking these criteria into account, a good working definition of bullying behavior is as follows:

‘Long-standing violence, mental or physical, conducted by an individual or a group against an individual who is not able to defend himself or herself in that actual situation’ (Roland, 1989; in Mellor, 1999).

Traditionally, defining, researching and the attempt to intervene against bullying behavior in schools have been based on treating it as a general phenomenon, rather than taking into account different sub-types of bullying behavior (Minton, 2012), and the fact that certain groups of young people are more ‘at risk’ of being targeted. However, over recent years, there is a growing body of evidence confirming the existence of specific forms of bullying behaviour. Importantly for this paper, this includes studies of homophobic bullying (Birkett, Espelage & Koemig, 2009; Espelage, Basile & Hamburger, 2012; Mayock, Bryan, Carr & Kitching, 2009; Minton, Dahl, O’ Moore & Tuck, 2008; Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni & Koenig, 2011; Robinson & Espelage, 2011; Roland & Auestad, 2009; Walton, 2004, 2006, 2011). Additionally, studies of alterophobic (prejudice directed towards members of ‘alternative’ sub-cultures’) (Minton, 2012) and bullying that is related to the target’s membership of an ethnic minority group (Hansen et al., 2008) exist. Such studies confirm that – at the very least - it is likely that prejudice exerts an influence on patterns of bullying behaviour (Minton, 2012).

Homophobic Bullying Behaviour

There are many possible definitions of homophobia and homophobic bullying. For the purposes of the studies described in the paper, the following definitions were used:

Homophobia: ‘The fear of being labeled homosexual and the irrational fear, dislike or hatred of gay males and lesbians’ (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1998; in Norman, Galvin & McNamara, 2006, p. 36).

Homophobic bullying: ‘Where general bullying behavior, such as verbal and physical abuse and intimidation, is accompanied by or consists of the use of terms such as gay, lesbian, queer or lezzie by perpetrators’ (Warwick, Aggleton & Douglas, 2001).

Homophobic bullying is, in the view of some authors, a much under-researched phenomenon. For example, Mishna, Newman, Daley & Solomon (2009) record that ‘... the preponderance of bullying research does not address sexual orientation as a possible factor’ (p. 1598), and Walton (2006) argues that, ‘...even though homophobia is a prominent feature of schoolyard bullying, it is also one of the most unchallenged forms of bullying’ (2006, p. 13). Studies conducted on the island of Ireland confirm Walton’s point around prominence. In Northern Ireland, Carolan & Redmond (2003), 44.0 per cent of their 362 member sample of LGB young people reported having been bullied at school in the last three months because of their sexual orientation. Minton et al. (2008) found that this was true of 50 per cent of their 123 member sample of LGB young people in the Republic of Ireland. A larger study in the Republic (n = 1, 100) showed that 58 per cent of the sample of LGB young people reported that homophobic bullying existed in their schools, and that 5 per cent had actually left school early because of homophobic bullying (Mayock et al., 2009).

Finally, in a study of sexual orientation and its relationship to bullying behavior – therefore, utilizing a sample of the general school-going population, rather than an LGB-specific one - Roland & Auestad (2009) showed that amongst 3,046 10th grade students in Norwegian schools, 7.3 per cent of heterosexual males reported having been bullied in the last two to three months, but this was true of 23.8 per cent of bisexual and 48 per cent of homosexual males. Furthermore, 5.7 per cent of heterosexual females reported having been bullied in the last two to three months, but this was true of 11.5 per cent of bisexual and 17.7 per cent of homosexual females. In understanding such findings, Minton et al. (2008) assert that a distinction should be borne in mind, between (i) (*presumed*) *sexual orientation-based bullying*, which constitutes targeted attacks on people known or believed to be of non-heterosexual orientation – this is likely to be acted upon, and quite possibly covered (since 2010) in schools’ anti-

bullying policies; and the far more frequent (ii) *heteronormative bullying*, which springs from a general ‘climate’ of homophobia and heteronormativity; typically, this involves the use of homophobic epithets, which are generally not challenged by teachers (Thurlow, 2001). It is extremely important to challenge heteronormative bullying in a school’s ‘preventative practice’ (Minton et al., 2008).

Methodology

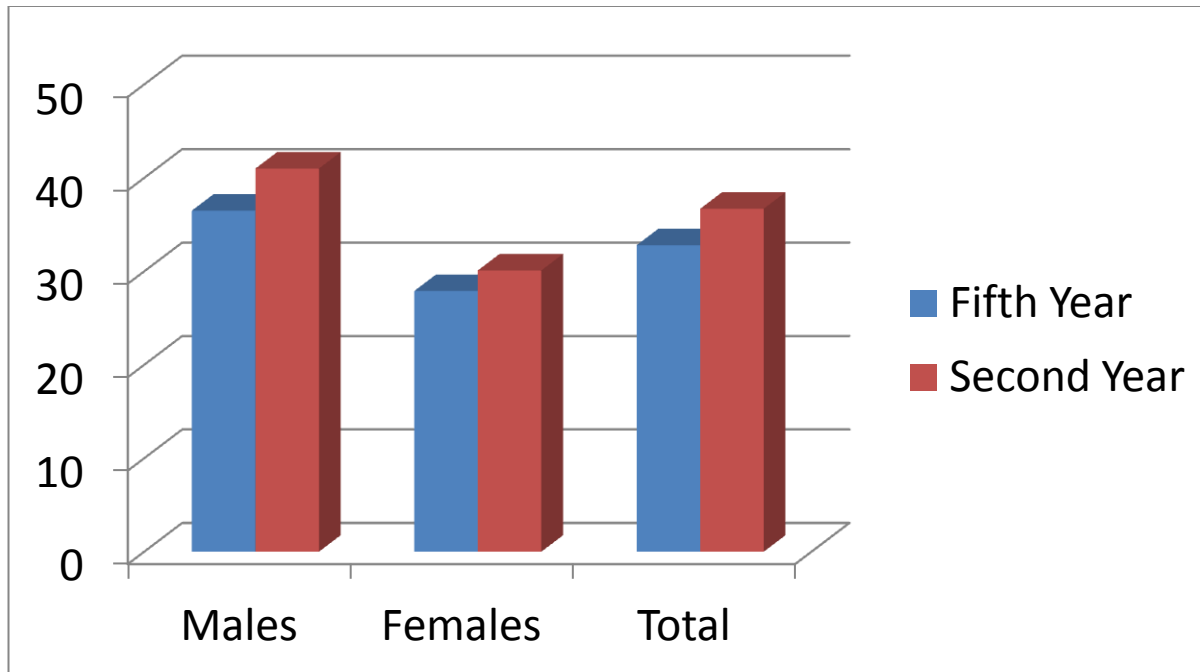
In May, 2010, 475 fifth year students (274 male (57.7 per cent), and 201 female (42.3 per cent)) at six second-level schools distributed over the geographical area of the Republic of Ireland (which included a balance of single-gender and co-educational student enrolment; rural / urban location; and, type of schools, in line with national characteristics). In each case, the participants completed an English-language translation (Minton, 2011) of the written questionnaire constructed for Roland & Auestad’s (2009) study in Norway. This ascertained the participant’s sexual orientation, and his or her involvement in bullying behaviour (as either a perpetrator or target) and homophobic bullying behaviour over the last two to three months. In the ‘findings’ that are presented below, these are referred to as the ‘Fifth Year’ findings. In May, 2011, 561 second year students (317 male (56.5 per cent), and 201 female (43.5 per cent) at the same six schools completed the same questionnaire. In the ‘findings’ that are presented below, these are referred to as the ‘Second Year’ findings.

The numbers on the y-axes in the charts that follow are percentages of the participants in the sample in each case.

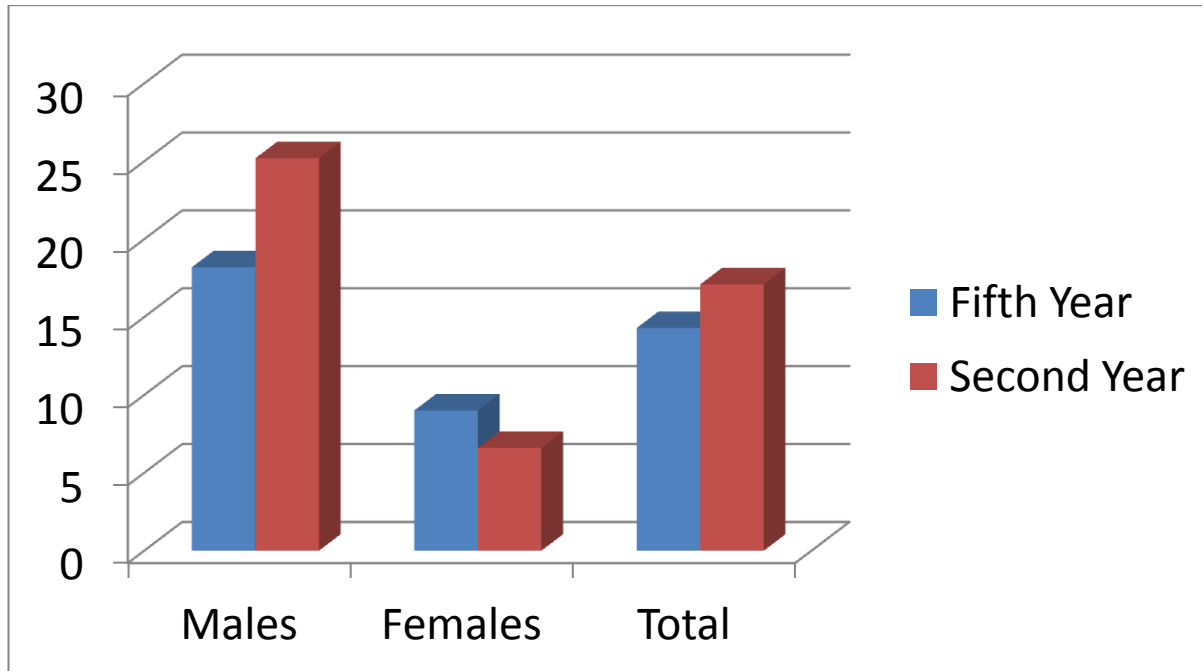
Some Findings and Recommendations

Some Principal Findings

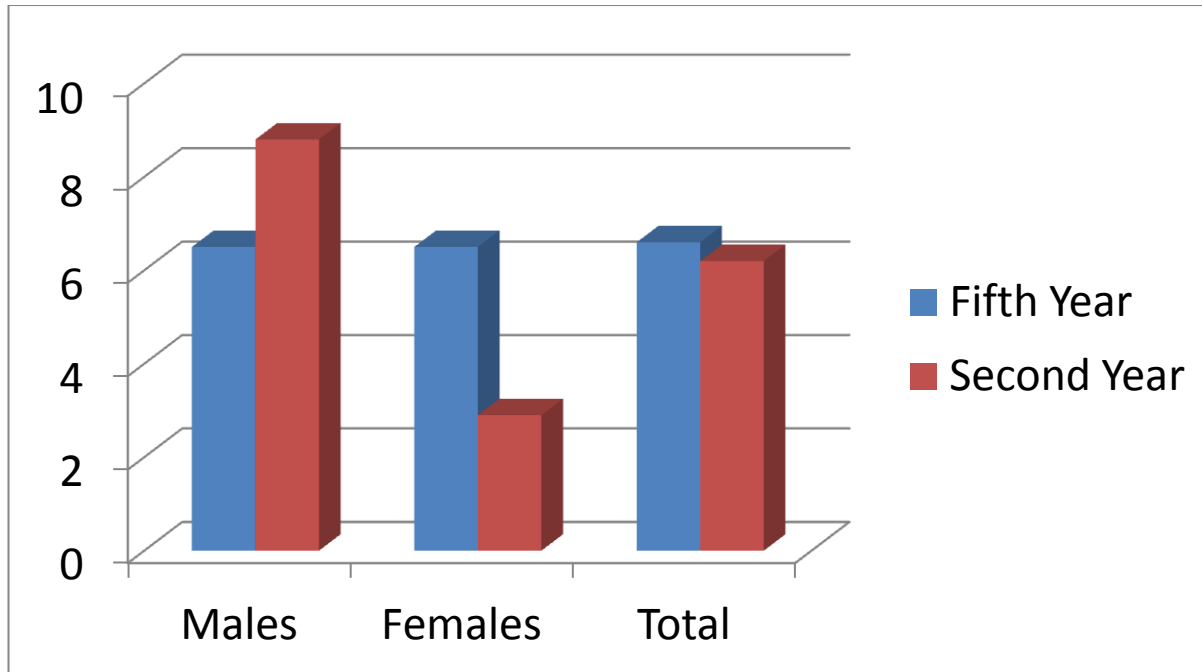
Reported having been bullied



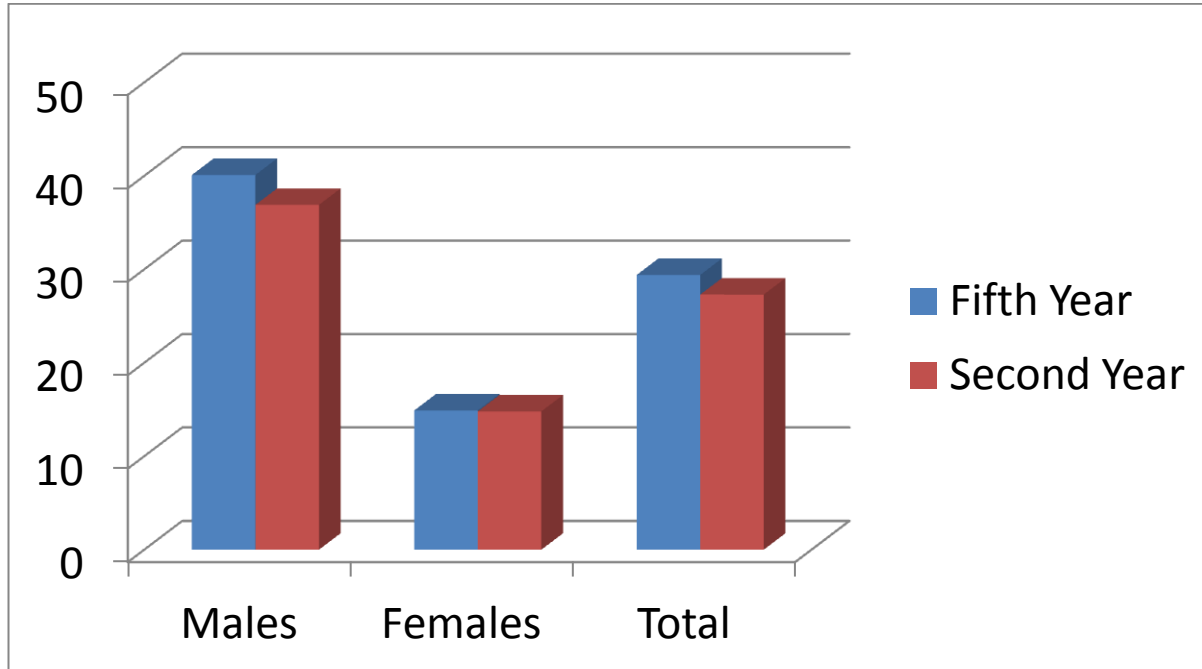
Reported having been homophobically bullied (through name-calling)



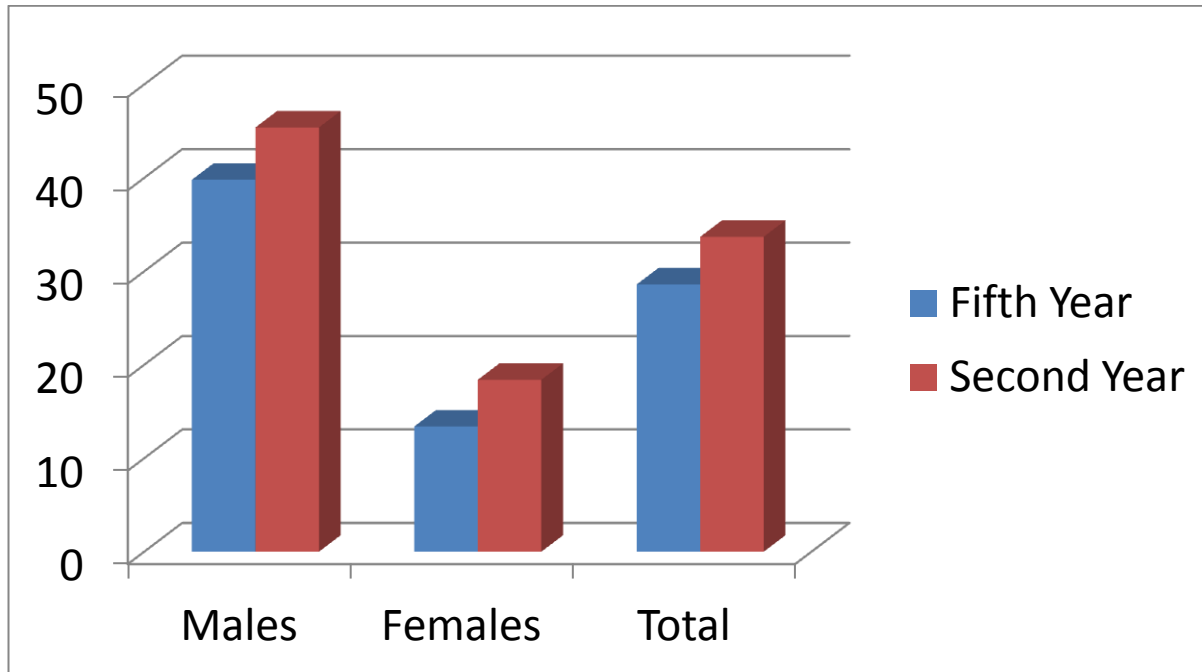
Reported having been homophobically bullied (through rumour-spreading)



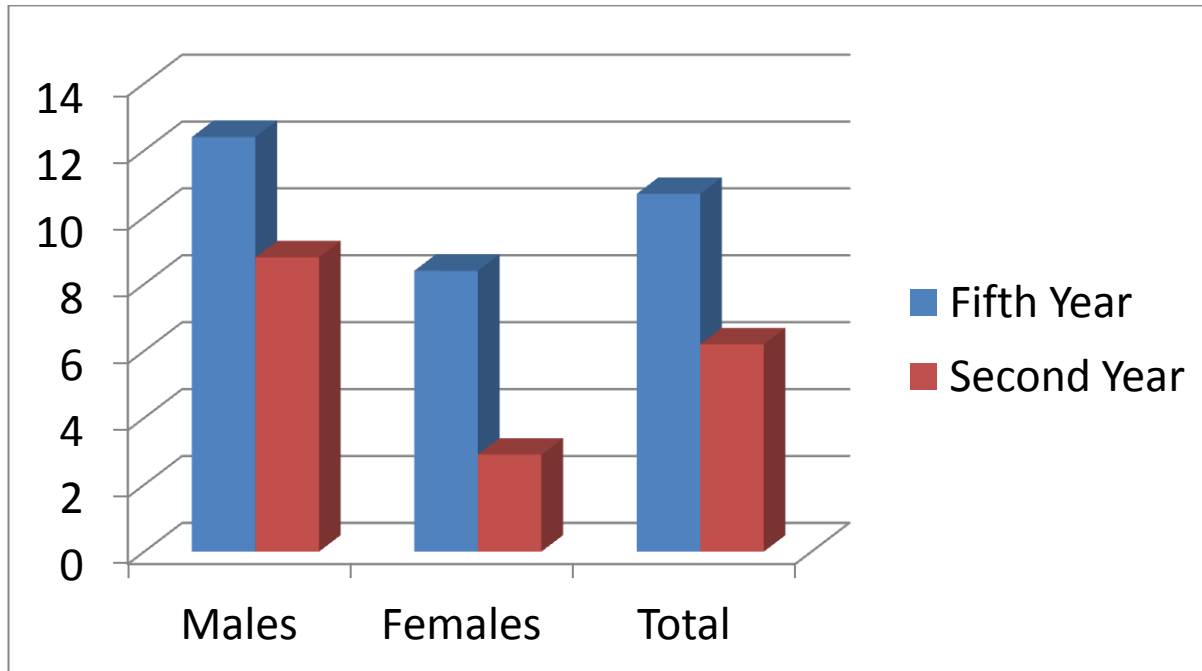
Reported having bullied others



Reported having homophobically bullied others (through name-calling)



Reported having homophobically bullied others (through rumour-spreading)



Results and Recommendations

From a brief examination of the charts above, it can be seen that both bullying and homophobic bullying were present at approximately the same levels in the fifth and second year studies; hence, there was no evidence of ‘age-related declines’ in categories of involvement. Therefore, it is recommended that both senior cycle students as well as junior cycle students should be actively involved in anti-bullying interventions. It is also evident that in both bullying and homophobic bullying, *gender* exerted a far greater influence than did *age*; hence, males should be especially focussed upon. Finally, the observed high prevalence of self-reports of homophobic bullying, allied to the finding that students were more likely to identify as perpetrators rather than as targets of homophobic bullying, demonstrates it is important to (i) attend to the influence of prejudice in anti-bullying action; (ii) develop and support programmes specific to anti-homophobic bullying; and, (iii) with such clear indicators of homophobic / heteronormative prejudice being evidenced early in the junior cycle of secondary education, to target pre-adolescent school students in anti-homophobic bullying action.

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Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Primary and Post Primary Schools

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Abstract

This brief presentation will outline the work of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Support Service in the design and delivery of continuous professional development for teachers on the subject of sexual orientation and homophobia. It will seek to reflect the experience and views of teachers. Both topics will be considered within the context of guidelines for schools developed by the Department of Education and Skills in partnership with GLEN, BeLonGTo and other partners.

Social Personal and Health Education

The Social Personal and Health Education Support Service (SPHE) delivers in-service training to teachers and school staffs on Sexual orientation and related areas. One of the Modules in SPHE is Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) within which Sexual Orientation is addressed. It is important that education on orientation and related areas is understood within the wider context of SPHE and RSE.

In 1995 the Report of the Expert Advisory Group on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) was published. It stated that “Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the developing personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others.” RSE is an integral part of general educational provision which seeks to promote the overall development of the person and which includes the integration of sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development. The Department of

Education and Science developed a RSE curriculum and teaching materials and 1996 was the beginning of RSE in-service for Primary and Post Primary teachers. RSE is a lifelong process that begins at birth and continues throughout life. It enables students to develop attitudes and values and also to acquire knowledge and skills. RSE is a required part of the curriculum from Primary school up to and inclusive of Senior Cycle at Post Primary school. Parents are the primary educators of the child in the area of relationships and sexuality and they have a right to opt their child out of any or all of the RSE programme if they so wish.

At Junior Cycle, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

The [Education Act, 1998](#) requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. Section 9 (d) of the Act states “A recognised school shall promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.” In 2003, SPHE became mandatory for all students from First to Third year. “SPHE provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.” (Junior Cycle Curriculum Framework, page3).

The aims of SPHE are:

- To enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities
- To promote self esteem and self confidence
- To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

The SPHE Curriculum is Modular and Spiral in nature. It consists of 10 modules each of which appears in each year of the three year junior cycle. A draft Senior Cycle has been developed by the NCCA, however SPHE is not mandatory at Senior Cycle.

Junior Cycle SPHE

10 Modules

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Belonging and Integrating• Self Management• Communication Skills• Physical Health• Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationships and Sexuality• Emotional Health• Influences and Decisions• Substance Use• Personal Safety
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The SPHE Support Service is a partnership between Health and Education and works with various organisations both statutory and voluntary. It delivers in-service to teachers and whole staffs (See Table 1). The training provided is done so using a systemic and incremental approach. Teachers are advised to follow the Syllabus and Guidelines developed by the NCCA.

Teacher In-service	In school support	Inter Agency Initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to SPHE X2 days • RSE JC X 2days • RSE SC X2 days • Addressing Sexual Orientation 1 day. • Mental Health x 3days: • Promoting Positive Mental Health, • Bereavement, Loss and Suicide, • Teenage Mental Health Issues. • Substance Use 1 day • Bullying: Relational Bullying and Positive strategies for addressing bullying • Internet Safety 1 day • Physical Health and Nutrition 1 day • Self Management 1 day • Personal Safety x 2 days • Child Protection 	<p>Whole Staff Workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the Welfare and Protection of Students • RSE in the Whole School Setting • Mental Health and Suicide Prevention • Sexual Orientation • Staff Welfare • Responding to Substance Use Issues <p><u>In School Team support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Development • Programme Planning • Supporting Senior Management and SPHE Teams re Best Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis Pregnancy Programme • Marie Keating Foundation • Bodywhys • Belong To • Glen • Mental Health Ireland • National Centre for Technology in Education • Garda Schools Programme

Table 1

At Primary level, RSE aims to help children learn at home and in school about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work is based on developing a good self image, promoting respect for self and others and providing appropriate information.

RSE at Primary Level

	Infants – Second Class	Third – Sixth Class	
Strands	Strand Units	Strand Units	
Myself	Uniqueness and self esteem My Body- Growth and Change New Life Keeping Safe Feelings & emotions Making decisions	Accepting Self Physical development Growing and changing Birth/new life- Feelings and emotions Personal hygiene Personal safety Making decisions	5 TH & 6 th class- Becoming an adult Parenthood
Myself and others	Myself and my family My friends Relating to others	Roles and responsibilities in families Friendship Portrayal of sexuality and relationships Roles of males/females in society Relating to others	5 th & 6 th Changing relationships in families and friendships Group affiliation and loyalty

At Post Primary, the aims of RSE are:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to one’s sexuality and the sexuality of others
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values in a moral/spiritual/social context.

Junior Cycle RSE

Human Growth and Development	Human Sexuality	Human Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The human lifecycle & physical and emotional changes at puberty • Hygiene and puberty • Sexual organs and their function • Emotions and moods characteristic of adolescence. Language for expressing emotions • Fertility, conception, pregnancy and birth • Implications of sexual activity • Sexually transmitted infections and STIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What it is to be male and female • Stereotyping and its influence • Equality and difference • <u>Sexual orientation</u> Discrimination • Respect for sexuality • Skills for personal safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for self awareness and building and maintaining self esteem • Friendship • Skills for establishing and maintaining relationships • Roles and responsibilities in relationships and families • Awareness of peer pressure

Senior Cycle RSE

Human Growth and Development	Human Sexuality	Human Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure and function of sexual organs • Awareness of fertility • Methods of family planning • Pregnancy and developing foetus, • Health care during pregnancy • Human emotions • Relationship between safe sexual practice and STIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What it means to be male or female • Male and female roles in relationships and in society • Awareness and understanding of sexual orientations • Issues pertaining to equality, sexual harassment, sexual abuse and rape including legal issues and help agencies • Skills for making sexual choices re sexual activity • Attitudes, values and beliefs regarding sexual behaviour in modern society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the nature of peer pressure • Skills for resolving conflict • Complex nature of love and loving relationships • Marriage as a loving commitment • Awareness of importance of family life.

Schools are required to have a RSE Policy in place before the commencement of the teaching of the RSE Programme. The policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality and applies to all staff, students, parents and Board of Management. All elements of the programme must be taught and cannot be omitted on grounds of ethos including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections etc. The Board of Management has responsibility to ensure RSE is made available to all students. Circular 0023-2010 outlines best practice regarding delivering the RSE/SPHE Programme. It is important that an open and facilitative

teaching approach which encompasses Kolb's experiential learn style be used and this provides opportunities for the voices of students to be heard. All teaching is challenging but the teaching of RSE is particularly challenging and requires a wide range of skills and high sensitivity. Effective learning requires a climate of trust and respect and the activities undertaken are informed by desired learning outcomes. Experiential learning maximises the involvement of students and a key skill is students developing the ability to reflect and apply the learning to themselves and their own lives. Assessment tools should be used which capture the spirit, attitudes, skills and knowledge of the RSE programme. While there is no formal examination in SPHE/RSE they come under subject inspection by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and inspection reports are available on the DES website (www.education.ie). All school personnel should be familiar with the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (www.sphe.ie).

Sexual Orientation

Sexuality is an integral part of being human and includes gender, sexual orientation, sexual expression, capacity for enjoyment and pleasure, relationships with oneself and others and reproduction. An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others. Schools can foster a culture that is accepting of difference. The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 provide protection against discrimination on nine grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. The Acts oblige those who manage schools to protect students and staff from discrimination or sexual harassment. The ethos of the whole school community should be inclusive of all students and ensure they are happy and safe irrespective of difference. Students should receive the message that each person is a valued member of the school community and that diversity is a valued part of school culture. The DES worked collaboratively with GLEN (Gay and Lesbian Equality Network) to develop a resource on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students in Post Primary Schools- Guidance for Principals and School Leaders.

A whole school approach to RSE and Sexual Orientation involves the following:

- Creating a school climate that is caring, open to difference and safe for all students

- Referring to homophobic bullying in relevant school policies and codes of behaviour.
- Addressing prejudice and name calling rather than hoping they will go away.
- Avoiding the assumption that everyone is heterosexual.
- Taking a team approach towards all aspects of RSE and ensuring that teachers are trained.
- Providing support for LGBT students if they request it or need it.

A 2009 report ‘Supporting LGBT Lives’ found that the most common age that people realise they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is twelve years and the most common age they disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to others is seventeen years. This research which examined the experiences of more than 1,100 LGBT people in Ireland also found that negative societal attitudes led to significant levels of depression, self harm, abuse of alcohol and suicidality among young LGBT people.

Research also shows that many LGBT young people have negative experiences at school. This can lead to under-achievement, early school leaving, poor self esteem, self harm and mental health problems.

Schools should, as advised by the Department of Education and Skills, include homophobic bullying as part of their anti-bullying policy. They should also include Sexual Orientation in their RSE Policy.

Those attending the Training day on Sexual Orientation are advised to have attended the basic two days Introduction to SPHE course, Junior Cycle RSE two days training and SC RSE training days so that the training is done in a context and is developmental. There are resources available to teachers when they have completed RSE Junior and Senior Cycle in-service and the inservice on Sexual Orientation.

The aims of the Training Day on Sexual Orientation are:

- To enable participants to explore their own attitudes and values
- To increase understanding of the experience of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people
- To enable participants to feel more confident in dealing with the topic in the classroom and in a whole school context
- To familiarise participants with the Growing Up LGBT Resource

Growing Up Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender: A Resource for SPHE and RSE has been developed by the Department of Education and Skills and the Health Service Executive through the SPHE Support Service in conjunction with Glen and BelongGTO Youth Services. While it is not a stand alone resource, it aims to increase awareness and understanding about sexual orientation and gender identity and to reduce levels of prejudice and discrimination against people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT). The resource also aims to develop in young people a greater understanding of the experience of being LGBT, to raise awareness of issues related to coming out, to foster equality and respect within a human rights framework and to provide information about relevant support organisations. It is designed for use with all year groups in Post Primary as part of an integrated SPHE programme at Junior Cycle and as part of RSE at Senior Cycle.

SPHE/RSE Teacher Teaching about Orientation and related areas:

- Know your school's RSE policy and anti Bullying policy
- Use resources such as TRUST and Growing Up LGBT and include LGBT issues where appropriate
- Model behaviour you would like students to adopt by discussing LGBT people and issues in a respectful way
- Ensure the classroom is a safe place and agree boundaries and ground rules
- Encourage critical thinking in relation to stereotyping and prejudice
- Challenge homophobic attitudes and comments; treat homophobic bullying as you would any other kind of bullying
- Be aware that some students may be LGBT but don't make any assumptions or label anyone
- Be sensitive to the feelings of someone who may be LGBT but hasn't disclosed this yet
- Be sensitive to the needs of students of all sexual orientations and gender identities.
- Don't suggest that being gay is 'just a phase'
- Respond with care and sensitivity to a student who comes out and be aware of supports available within the school and outside it.

Provide information on further supports such as BeLonGTo if a student needs it or requests it.

- Encourage respect for diversity and the dignity of each person.

Central to all of this work in schools is the support of the Principal and Management and a whole school supportive climate. Accommodating difference is about more than tolerance – it requires recognition of and respect for diversity. A continued proactive and questioning approach to all aspects of inclusion and diversity is needed.

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Pamphlets:

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Teachers Supporting Diversity. Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students- ASTI, TUI, Glen
Transgender and Gender Diversity Information for Guidance Counsellors, Transgender Equality Network Ireland.

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LGBT Teachers' Negotiations of Schools in Ireland

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Abstract

In negotiating their everyday lives in schools in Ireland, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) teachers experience deep identity conflicts and struggles with school culture that involve continuous self-censorship and emotional investment (Neary 2012; Gowran 2004). Given the deep silences that have surrounded LGBT sexualities in Irish schools, initiatives that have raised awareness among education partners, school leaders and guidance counsellors about the importance of explicit mentioning of homophobic bullying and sexual orientation in school policies (GLEN 2012) and the recent action plan for tackling homophobic bullying have been welcome progress (Department of Education and Skills 2013). However, it is clear that a gap exists between policy and its implementation in schools where teachers' struggles with normative and cultural practices are evidence of the working of heteronormativity in Irish schools. In this paper, I will present an overview of research with LGBT primary and second-level teachers in Ireland and highlight some central issues and complexities in relation to the conference theme School 'Ethos' and LGBT sexualities.

Introduction

This paper addresses three central themes drawn from a review of the research on LGBT teachers in Ireland and raises questions for further exploration. This is not intended to be a systematic review of all research related to the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) teachers in Ireland. Rather, the exploration of three central themes serves as a starting point for exploring the complexity of LGBT teachers' everyday lives.

Methods and Focus

A small body of research exists on LGBT teachers in Ireland (Gowran 2004; Lillis 2009; Sheils 2012; Neary 2013). The fact that none of the participants in any of this research identify as transgender is illustrative of the deep, multifaceted layers of silence that surround transgender identities in the Irish education system. This paper proceeds with the acronym 'LGBT' while being cognisant that there is a necessity for in-depth research on the experiences of transgender teachers and students in the Irish context.

Gowran's research used qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 2 primary school and 5 second-level LGBT teachers to explore 'the general climate of schools in relation to lesbian and gay issues, the level of safety to be 'out'⁴ in schools; how teachers manage their lesbian or gay identity in relation to their role as teacher; participants' own experiences as lesbian or gay educators' (Gowran 2004, p.42).

Lillis's research was with primary school teachers who were members of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) LGBT Teachers' Group. 6 in-depth interviews with the teachers sought to 'explore the specificity of heteronormative values and attitudes in the primary school context; to examine how LGBT primary school teachers negotiate their sexual orientation with colleagues and to examine the strategies employed by the LGB Teacher to resist heteronormativity within the school setting' (Lillis 2009, p.12).

Sheils's research drew on 9 qualitative interviews with primary school teachers who identified as lesbian or gay and 171 questionnaires sent to primary schools around Ireland to explore the impact of Section 37.1 of the Employment Equality Act (an "ethos" exemption) on the personal and professional lives of primary school teachers, particularly lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers (Sheils 2012).

In my own research (Neary 2013), I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with 8 teachers who identified as lesbian or gay (5 primary and 3 second-level) to explore teachers' experiences of "coming out" in Irish schools. This paper will also draw on my current research with 15 (7 primary and 8 second-level teachers). Over a 15 month period, initial in-depth interviews with each teacher, diary and retrospective reflections and semi-structured follow-up interviews explore how teachers negotiate their

personal and professional identities in Irish schools while planning/entering into a civil partnership (CP).

What follows is presentation and discussion of three central themes across this research: 1. Being a Teacher, 2. Constant Emotional Work, 3. School Ethos

1. Being a Teacher

The teaching profession is unique because teachers are products of the schooling system and therefore subject to the same cultural bias of that system (Gowran 2004). LGBT teachers have embodied the uncomfortable relationship between sexuality and schooling, making the negotiation of a teacher identity a complex one. Many LGBT teachers see the teaching profession as a 'closet' that provoked 'stifling' feelings because of the complexities associated with disclosing an identification with a sexual identity other than heterosexual (Neary 2013, p.589). Feelings such as these sit alongside the fact that teachers have 'played the game' of education and have been successful at it because they are 'endowed with the habitus that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field' (Bourdieu 1993, 72). And so, on one hand, LGBT teachers have the capital required to negotiate the field of education but on the other hand, they cannot adequately present a complete correspondence with what is valued by schools: heterosexuality. In this way, their 'habitus is displaced; a fish out of water (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, 43). This conflict is borne out in the following quote from one of the teachers in Lillis's research: 'The teacher has such a role in the life of the child and you obviously are going to have to be perfect. And that's the role of a teacher and [being lesbian or gay] totally messes everything up' ('Aoife' cited in Lillis 2009, p.24).

Much recent research in the sociology of education confirms schooling systems as having 'privatization tendencies [that] have undercut the idea of education as a collective and public good and established it as a saleable commodity and an asset to be competed over by self-interested individuals' (Youdell 2011, p.13). Teachers, as part of this competitive environment, feel pressure to comply with the 'business-as-usual' of education but are aware that - in the delicate negotiation of the professional/personal boundary in relation to their sexuality - always lurking in the background is the idea that 'you just need one parent to complain...' (Sarah VEC School

Teacher). The following section provides a glimpse into the constant emotional work of LGBT teachers in their school environments.

2. Constant Emotional Work

There is much evidence in other contexts to show that LGBT teachers labour over the construction of an acceptable teacher identity in their school contexts (Griffin 1992; Harbeck 1992; Khayatt 1992; Ferfolja 2007; Rudoe 2010). Aligned with the international context, the research reviewed here highlights several factors that are indicative of the complexity of this negotiation in the Irish context.

The Public/Private Boundary

Many teachers, in order to successfully negotiate the private/public boundary, have valued privacy as a mechanism of protection and some see this privacy as an issue of appropriateness (Neary 2013). However, many teachers note that the concept of privacy can also be a cloak that covers the more subtle negotiations of identity:

I think people don't realise, they think your private life is your private life, and that nobody shares their private life really at work, and they don't realise how much they really do share. Like, I know whether my colleagues are married or not, often although not always, whether they're going out with someone or not. If they are they usually feel free to have that partner, or lover, or whatever, come and collect them or drop them off. And they get all kinds of little approvals. ('Sheila' cited in Gowran 2004, p.45)

Here, Sheila points to the myriad of ways that heterosexual teachers subtly and unconsciously lean on their heterosexual personal lives as capital in their school environment. Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence' helps us to understand the subtleties of these negotiations. 'Concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 4) ensures that the privilege of heterosexual teachers is legitimated and maintained.

Risk Evaluation

Many teachers are conscious of the potential negative reactions of others if they disclose: 'It is an effort because I think you always have to deal with someone's reaction, where it's so much easier not to bother with that' (Mairéad cited in Neary 2013, p.592). Some teachers bear the result of entrenched ideals of appropriateness around sexuality: 'I'm not going to put it in anybody's face' (Eimear, Catholic Primary School) while other teachers have reflected that this kind of sentiment is an "internalised homophobia" which 'leads to the projection of our own negative thoughts and feelings about our sexuality onto other individuals' (Lillis 2009, p.53). There are other fears that teachers experience that colour and shape their approaches to school life. One of these is the very potent fear of the misconception of gay male sexuality as being somehow related to paedophilia. Some teachers admit that they are 'incredibly cautious' (Simon, Primary School Principal) or that "a child will say that they are the victim of some sort of abuse from me – that's my biggest fear and I don't know how the school, the system would back me' ('Orla' cited in Gowran 2004, p.49).

The concept of the 'superteacher' (Rasmussen 2006) is corroborated in the research I am currently conducting with LGBT teachers who are having a civil partnership. LGBT teachers work extremely hard to 'compensate' for their 'alternative' sexual identity in an effort to prevent potential risk. Teachers attempt to have a 'strong enough presence' (Steve Primary School Teacher) so that they can "create a scenario where people won't mess with you...strict boundaries because of the sexuality thing being such a risky thing in school" (Bev, Voluntary Secondary School Teacher). This continuous emotional work of self-surveillance in constructing a finely tuned teacher identity is evidence that teachers have embodied the rules of the apparatus of sexuality deployed in this context (Foucault 1978).

3. School "Ethos"

Given the complex history of the relationship between church and state in relation to education in Ireland, it is unsurprising that a religious exemption exists in employment equality law. Section 37.1 of the Employment Equality Act permits 'favourable treatment on the religion ground' to an employee or prospective in order to maintain the ethos of the institution and 'action which is reasonably necessary to prevent an employee or a prospective employee from undermining the religious ethos of the

institution' (*Employment Equality Act* 1998, 2004). Sheils (2012) research highlights the difficulties that this legislation has posed for many teachers. Of those who responded to questionnaires, 29 % felt their lifestyle not compatible with ethos of school and 10% articulated antagonistic responses to Church involvement in education. All nine of the LGBT teachers interviewed felt a conflict between their personal lives and the ethos of school (Sheils 2012). This legislation causes fear on a daily basis for many of these teachers:

“One of the girls that I work with got married but didn't have a religious ceremony...she was basically told to keep that quiet...that really shocked me when she told me that because God, if they're that backward about straight people getting married, God only knows what they'd be like if something else came up....Because it's a Catholic school, if you're not following...their way of doing things, you might be asked to leave...or put in a position where you didn't feel you were kind of welcome” ('Amy' cited in Neary 2013).

All of the research on LGBT teachers in Ireland points to the particular vulnerability of early career LGBT teachers: 'Because I wasn't permanent there was no way even regardless of the principal I was going to come out because you wouldn't know if it would change things, you don't know who's on the interview panel' (Steve Primary School Teacher). However, it must also be noted that a majority of teachers experience difficulty with tackling homophobia or interrupting heterosexism (O' Higgins-Norman 2004) often because of a vagueness around ethos and school policy but for many LGBT teachers there is a desire not to be seen as 'the gay teacher who the gay kids go to if they have a gay problem because that could ghettoise it even more to be honest!' ('Conor' in Neary 2013, p.589). It is clear that current equality law is a significant barrier for LGBT teachers and so, the distinct possibility that this law will be repealed or amended this year is significant progress. However, the repeal of Section 37.1 will not be a magic wand that removes the presence of homophobia or heterosexism. For example, currently, the principal of a school plays a very important role in shaping how the ethos of the school is acted out in local contexts and a myriad of factors will affect the lives of LGBT teachers in a post-religious exemption era.

Conclusions and Questions

The three themes touched upon in this paper – the teaching profession itself, the emotional labour involved in constructing a teacher identity and the weight of school ‘ethos’ – are slices of the complexity of everyday life for LGBT teachers and thus, confirm the matrices of power/sexuality relations present in the Irish schooling system. I would like to raise some questions in light of this complexity. The participants in the various research projects are perhaps not representative of all LGBT teachers and nor do the authors claim that they are. However, it might be useful to think about the research in the Irish context in terms of ‘who’ is doing the speaking and the kinds of sexual subjectivities that might remain cloaked in silence in the Irish schooling system. Questions might also be raised about ‘progressive’ discourses that promote ‘coming out’ as a the best or only way forward for LGBT teachers given the power imbued complexity of the politics of visibility (Rasmussen 2004; Neary 2013) and the very real implications of legislation (Sheils 2012). A caution might also be offered here in relation to seeing the removal of the religious exemption (Section 37.1) as a definitive answer to the problems of LGBT teachers teaching in the 91% of primary schools and 52% of second-level schools that are currently under religious patronage. Furthermore, it might be useful to point out that a simple dichotomy of ‘secular’ versus ‘religious’ rights is unhelpful and that many LGBT teachers have strong religious faith and spirituality that is often overlooked in the move for a ‘progressive’ politics of sexuality. What becomes clear in a review of the research on LGBT teachers in the Irish context is that a myriad of multifaceted factors shape their everyday negotiations of school life.

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Ethos and Schooling - A Religious Perspective

Michael Redmond

Joint Managerial Body

Abstract

Mission statements, displayed in the lobbies of the majority of post-primary schools in Ireland, represent a synthesis of the core values of the organisation – their espoused theory. Their theory-in-use however, requires to be continually brought into closer coherence with their vision and leading this ongoing task, in large measure, is the responsibility of the principal. This presentation outlines the challenges facing the school leader as he or she negotiates the day-to-day living-out of their school's ethos. Voluntary secondary schools in Ireland live-out an ethos founded on the values of Jesus Christ who rejoiced in diversity and who castigated the stone throwers. Mission statements of faith-schools don't articulate dogma, they articulate a shared journey towards authentic holism (which includes the sacred) and authentic community (which, to us, is sacred). Of course nobody reads their school mission statement every day – hopefully because they're too busy living it! This brief sharing of the principal's perspective around faith-in-action explores what ethos means to school leader practitioners and how these internal values integrate with external policy and societal expectations.

Introduction

Thank you for this opportunity to share the experience of leading a Catholic school and to explain what living-out its ethos means to me. This is a personal perspective and should not be taken as representative of any given organisational stance on faith, schooling or indeed inclusion.

School leadership is profoundly influenced by the identity of the leader him or herself. In my case, I am a Catholic white, middle aged, middle class, married-with-children, heterosexual, Irish public-servant male. At my age, and following fourteen years of headship, I self-police and self-authorise my actions, behaviours and attitudes. I am committed to compliance only

as a way of sleeping at night but am equally not afraid of other protective strategies on the part of my school community such as gate-keeping, civil disobedience, strategic inefficiency, deadline flexibility and even outright subversion. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a hugely subversive document so I feel I'm in good company!

Like the hundreds of principals I know, I can't say I haven't a suite of prejudices but I do know that I have a hierarchy of values and imperatives and that, for me, the Christ who loves diversity and castigated the stone-throwers trumps dogma, canon law or any other prescription that erodes my or anyone else's humanity. I hire teachers because they can teach. Am I absolved from imperfection? No, but I value self-awareness and self-referencing over every other capacity – it's exhausting but I know of no other moral way of living and doing my job.

Exploring ethos

Etymology

The dictionary says that *ethos* is a Greek word meaning 'character', used to describe the guiding beliefs or ideals that characterise a community, nation, or ideology. I like the looseness of the word 'guiding', as almost everything that requires decisions made on the basis of one's governing values in a school is contingent and contextualised. There are no road-maps.

I particularly like the original meaning of *ethos* as 'the habitat of horses', (Iliad 6.511). I picture this as a place where a horse is free to be a horse, just like a school is a place where a child is free to be a child.

The Greeks also used this word to refer to the power of music to influence its hearer's emotions, behaviours, and even morals. The subliminality of music's power is something we take for granted and even enjoy or celebrate – it gets to the heart. I want the *ethos* of my school to be equally subliminal and heart-reaching. The holy icons and spiritual practices take you only so far. It's the power of love (and yes, schools are nothing if they are not sites of love) which presents as care, empowerment, challenge and right-relationship that really matters.

Everything else is tinkering.

Espoused values

The espoused values of my school, like most others, are captured in the mission statement in the lobby. It reads:

Our Mission

We strive to meet the needs of the whole school community so that the growth and development of each individual is realised. We seek to achieve this by creating a family atmosphere where parents & guardians, staff & students work for the spiritual, intellectual, moral, physical and emotional growth of all.

To achieve our mission, we strive to:

- *Provide an integral, quality education*
- *Educate in family spirit*
- *Educate for formation in faith*
- *Educate for service, justice & peace*
- *Educate for adaptation & change*

I defy anyone to come-up with a more comprehensive challenge in any organisation anywhere!

It's easy to dismiss mission statements as bland, ignored, compliance-driven, annoying aspirations stuck behind a frame. No, we don't read it every day but it *is* annoying. I have it on the wall over my desk and it challenges me constantly, framing my thinking, behaviour and actions – especially at key decision-making points.

One of the principal challenges in life is to align your espoused values with your values-in-action so, in the context of the LGBT debate, how do I do this?

Lived values and seeking congruency

I like to think I am colour-blind, but I am not. I am equally not Traveller-blind, or gay-blind or anything else blind. Blindness is not what I'm after. I want sight. I want insight. At one point, four key members of our school community were openly gay men. I appointed three of them, not in spite of their sexual identities and not because of them but because I internalised a set of values which focussed on a 'fit' between personhood and professional demand. This wasn't, and still isn't, easy. Blindness (or pretend-blindness which is worse), doesn't help. Awareness helps. Self-awareness in terms of values, influence of personal history, and my

prejudicial shadow-self helps. Other-awareness in terms of empathic understanding, deep listening and authentic holism helps.

This is what I mean about self-authorisation. It's not my place here to challenge orthodoxy in the form of the Catholic Church's current stance on homosexuality or Ireland's statutory provisions for the protection of ethos in schools and hospitals. I don't have a fixed personal position on these. I operate at that level only on the question of 'is this a deal-breaker for me?' and it's not. I absolutely accept Pope Benedict's argument against extreme relativism, placing oneself as the arbiter of truth and this essay should carry a health-warning as it reflects a highly relativistic stance on life. I am more taken, however, with Pope Francis's emphasis on lived-out compassion. As a biologist and believer in evolution I hope to see movement soon, however glacial, on integrating compassion with prescription into the future. Meanwhile I refuse to allow my faith to become like smoking – acceptable in private but prohibited from the public space. I am happy and proud to be both Catholic and Irish.

Frameworks

I mentioned the mission statement on my wall. I have two other supportive items in my line of sight, which I use as occasional attitude-adjusters. The first of these is Danah Zohar's (2005) principles of spiritually intelligent leadership. I know we're supposed to have a childlike faith but I really believe that a working faith and authentic spirituality are very adult affairs. Zohar's list is just that – a framework for recognising how very spiritual we are in living a full adult life, even though we might not wish to acknowledge it (it's easier to admit to being a banker than a Catholic!). There is no scope in this written piece to translate each element into action but even the existence of the framework itself is at least cause for reflection:

1. Self-awareness—knowing what I believe in and value, and what deeply motivates me.
2. Spontaneity—living in and being responsive to the moment.
3. Being vision - and value-led—acting from principles and deep beliefs, and living accordingly.
4. Holism—seeing larger patterns, relationships, and connections; having a sense of belonging.

5. Compassion—having the quality of ‘feeling-with’ and deep empathy.
6. Celebration of diversity—valuing other people for their differences, not despite them.
7. Field independence—standing against the crowd and having one’s own convictions.
8. Humility—having the sense of being a player in a larger drama, of one’s true place in the world.
9. Tendency to ask fundamental ‘why?’ questions—needing to understand things and get to the bottom of them.
10. Ability to reframe—standing back from a situation or problem and seeing the bigger picture; seeing problems in a wider context.
11. Positive use of adversity—learning and growing from mistakes, setbacks, and suffering.
12. Sense of vocation—feeling called upon to serve, to give something back.

The final item on my wall came from a priest at retreat. I see it from two perspectives, from my own and from that of my school. Either way it’s hugely reassuring and incidentally also works from a family or even a nation’s perspective. I understand members of the LGBT community and their families’ anxiety to move quickly on the social, professional and statutory inequalities currently at work. It’s essential that the advocacy and agency around this is maintained, resourced, personalised and professionalised. It’s equally essential however, not to have this task become all consuming. We are a spark between two eternities and life is to be lived, not fought. Christ’s words ‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’ to me means that I, my school and my country are on a journey towards actualisation – a realisation of all our potentialities. That we’ll never get there isn’t important. That we’re not alone is, so:

*Quit beating up on yourself
You can't root out your weaknesses - forget trying
You will grow organically
Stay focused on the goodness of God and on your own weakness
Let God do the work*

Michael Redmond is Research and Development Officer of the Joint Managerial Body. He is a former principal of two Dublin secondary schools and was appointed to his present position in September 2009. The role of RDO encompasses a range of functions: conducting educational and management research, presenting reports and position papers on key issues, advising boards of management and school management, attending meetings with the education partners and providing information and reports for Council and for the General Secretary. Michael also works on behalf of JMB in a wide variety of educational areas including special educational needs, curriculum development, intercultural education, inclusion, disadvantage initiatives and ICT in schools. He is also a current Deputy Chairperson of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

What insights can research in other contexts offer to this topic?

The following papers were presented in the second session of the conference and provide insight from other contexts.

Claiming a space for LGBT within a social justice agenda for schools

Dr Renée DePalma

University of A Coruña, Spain

Abstract

The No Outsiders Project, an initiative designed to address LGBT equalities as part of a broader equalities agenda, ran in the UK from 2006-2008. A team of 26 teachers throughout England worked together with university researchers from three universities to “undo homophobia” in primary schools, working with children from pre-school to age 11. The notion of “undoing” homophobia focuses first on the ways in which it has been socially constructed over time and has become part of a heteronormative institutional culture. Teachers examined the ways in which homophobia was supported by conscious and unconscious acts, unexplored assumptions, silences, and tacit exclusions. Teachers used literature and the arts to explore themes such as family diversity and gender non-conformity in ways that were relevant and accessible to children. In this presentation I will describe and analysis some teachers’ experiences.

This paper is adapted from:

DePalma, R. (in press) Dismantling folk theories and claiming a space within a social justice agenda. In Gerald Walton, *The Gay Agenda: Creating Space, Identity, and Justice*. Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang.

Introduction

The *No Outsiders* Project, an initiative designed to address LGBT equalities as part of a broader equalities agenda, ran from 2006-2008. A team of 26 teachers throughout England worked together with university researchers from three universities to “undo homophobia” in primary schools, working with children from pre-school to age 11. The notion of “undoing” homophobia focuses first on the ways in which it has been

socially constructed over time and has become part of the institutional culture.

The project was based on a strong and proactive equalities agenda, yet this agenda was sometimes twisted by popular conceptions of what it means to include LGBT experience in the primary school curriculum. Four folk theories became evident as the project unfolded that shaped both the kinds of challenges our teachers faced and their practical responses.

1. Everyone should be treated equally, fairly, and respectfully, with no special privileges for any one group.

Perhaps the most insidious function of this “no special treatment” understanding of fairness is that it serves to perpetuate the assumption that the *status quo* is a result of the natural order of things, rather than an historical and political project. A first step in including sexual minorities in our equalities agenda was to identify the many subtle and mundane ways in which normative and exclusive understandings of gender and sexuality dominate school spaces.

Miles, the head teacher of a relatively diverse urban school, designed an after-school art club focusing on the diversity of families in a school community in a large metropolitan area. The school had a relatively high percentage of same-sex parents, and so he wanted to provide these children with a space to explicitly represent these families. But he also noted that, while most of the children in the school seemed to have a notion of what a “normal” family was (mom, dad, children), relatively few of them actually had families that fit this imaginary. Some were adopted or in foster care, others were cared for by grandparents, and many came from single-parent homes or their parents did not live together.

Children worked with a local artist, and looked at photos of different families (these included a photo of Miles’ own family: himself, his partner, and two children). Upon reflection, he pointed out that, “there are also many people who come from quite intolerant families. And this might be the only chance in their life where somebody says, ‘there are other ways of living’” (No Outsiders Project Team, 2010, p. 12).

2. Homosexuality is mainly about sex, and as such is an inappropriate topic for young children.

Teachers are generally far more accepting of intimate behaviour involving heterosexual relationships. Passionate kisses are the norm in many Disney

films, for example, even those involving adolescent characters. As part of the *No Outsiders* project, all participating schools were provided with a pack of books that involved gay, lesbian, and non gender-conforming protagonists.

Project books featuring same-sex relationships included *And Tango Makes Three*, which is based on the true story of two male penguins at New York's Central Park Zoo who formed a couple and raised a chick that had been abandoned by its mother. Children in one project school wrote and performed an opera based on the story. John, the *No Outsiders* teacher, wrote the music, and children wrote lyrics that included "They will search for each other. They will kiss to show their love. They will hug to find the warmth. They must be in love. They will dance to say hello..." (No Outsiders Project Team, 2010, p. 33)

These primary school-aged children had no difficulty conceptualizing acts of physical intimacy associated with love, without falling prey to the sexualized assumptions often made by adults when describing non-heterosexual relationships.

3. Homosexuality is deviant, transgressive, and approaches criminality.

This kind of thinking was apparent in some of the negative press responses to the *No Outsiders Project*. One reporter quoted a spokesperson for *The Christian Institute* as saying, "When an adult who is working in a primary school suggests that children should explore their sexuality, that should result in a complaint to the police."

When the *No Outsiders* project started in 2005, Civil Partnerships had recently been legally recognized in 2004. One of the books that was widely used throughout project schools was *King and King*, which featured a prince who has no interest in marriage until he falls in love with, and marries, the brother of one of his princess suitors. Project teacher Leanne described the response her 5 and 6 year-old pupils had, when she first read them this book:

When I started to read the *King and King* book the first time, I never mentioned anything about the book – I didn't use it in any different way than I would have used any book in school. When I was reading it, the children themselves said, "Does that mean they're gay?" and I said, "Yes, it does" and one of the girls said, "You can do it now [i.e. have a civil partnership] – it's legal. It used to be illegal but you can now," and I said, "That's right," and

that's all they said about it, and that was from them and not me (No Outsiders Project Team, 2010, p. 26).

These children went on to perform the story in the form of a video production filmed at a real local castle, and parents were invited to the screening of the film at school.

Children are often more capable of participating in legal, moral, and ethical discussions, for which we often give them credit. The alternative is, all too often, an awkward silence because teachers often are not entirely sure how to interpret their rights and responsibilities with respect to LGBT inclusion.

4. Openly addressing LGBT issues might offend someone's religion.

In designing the *No Outsiders* project, we strategically selected the title *No Outsiders* based on a quote from South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "Everyone is an insider, there are no outsiders – whatever their beliefs, whatever their colour, gender or sexuality." We wanted to trouble right from the beginning the assumption that social justice for LGBT people was somehow incommensurable with religious values; in fact, Tutu's status as a human rights advocate and religious leader recast our agenda as one that could be taken up from a religious perspective.

One project teacher, Sue, was the head teacher of a small Church of England village school. She was particularly clear that her religious agenda, and that of the school, was clearly commensurable with the project goals. She incorporated Archbishop Tutu's full quote into her school's inclusion policy. At the end of the year, Sue held a festival of celebration to showcase the work that teachers had been doing throughout the school as part of the *No Outsiders* project. Children processed from the school into the chapel carrying a rainbow flag, listened to the vicar compare the work of the *No Outsiders* project with the teachings of Jesus, and performed for family and friends various songs, dances, and activities related to the work they had done throughout the year.

After the project was finished, Sue reflected on her religious and educational leadership role as the head of a Church of England school, "I have always been a strong believer in justice, and I began to see that I had to do some challenging, and that my powerful role as head teacher gave me a kind of mandate to do so" (No Outsiders Project Team, 2010, p. 56).

A social justice agenda for schools

Improvement in general, and in particular in terms of LGBT equalities, needs to be on every school's agenda, no matter what other educational, social, economic, and religious objectives it pursues. Andy, a *No Outsiders* teacher who published a set of lesson plans for Key Stage 1 and 2 (ages 5-11), describes the importance of such an agenda for young children:

Five year olds need to be taught that gay people exist. Some five year olds will already know this; there are children in our schools today who are being brought up by parents in a same-sex relationship, and there are children who have gay uncles and aunts, gay brothers and sisters, gay grandparents. There are children living next door to gay people and children whose parents socialise with gay people...Gay people are in fact everywhere.... except in the National Curriculum, and certainly not visibly in our schools (No Outsiders Project Team, 2010, p. xi).

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No Outsiders Project Team. (2010). *Undoing homophobia in primary schools*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Renée DePalma received her PhD in 2003 from the University of Delaware (USA). Her research and teaching has focused on equalities and social justice in terms of race, ethnicity, language, sexuality and gender. She worked as a researcher at the University of Sunderland in the UK from 2004 to 2006, investigating homophobia in school contexts and focusing on the primary level. From 2006-2009 she was Senior Researcher on the UK-based *No Outsiders* project, an action research project investigating approaches to address lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality in primary schools. The project yielded two books: *Undoing homophobia in primary schools* (2010) and *Interrogating heteronormativity in primary schools: The work of the No Outsiders Project* (2009), both published by Trentham books. She currently teaches at the University of A Coruña (Spain).

Equality Now? "Post-Homophobia" and its Discontents

Professor Debbie Epstein

University of Cardiff

Abstract

*Jeffrey Weeks has argued persuasively in *The World We have Won* (2009) that times have changed in the UK for LGBT people. The passing of equality legislation applying to sexuality, the repeal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, the equalising of the age of consent and the introduction of civil partnerships (and, in 2013, against the wishes of the majority of the Conservative Party, marriage) for same sex couples are all indicative of cultural changes around sexuality. These have, as Weeks shows, shaped and been shaped by more liberal attitudes to sex and sexuality more generally, resulting in a qualitative change in people's lived experiences since the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967. There are now government guidelines for schools on the prevention of homophobic bullying and, it has been argued, young men in schools no longer turn to homophobia as a way of proving their masculinity (McCormack 2012). In this paper, I ask whether all these factors should lead us to the conclusion that all is now well in the world in relation to questions of sexuality. Are we now 'post' the need for activism, has equality been achieved and is it time to turn from this struggle to other, more relevant ones still to be won? Starting from these questions, I argue that 'post' homophobia is far from where we are either in the UK or internationally, that there is a schizoid quality to many equality policies which seek simultaneously to reduce homophobia and promote heteronormativity (Renold and Epstein 2010) and that policies do not necessarily result in the practices they describe. To do so I draw on my own work and that of others, including my doctoral students, to survey briefly the situation with regards to sexuality in the UK, sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa and Uganda in particular), Latin America (especially Chile) and the fractured picture in the US.*

Introduction

The key feature of the 1980s was that, for the time being, the initiative on sexual matters passed to the Right, even as the pace of social change continued to undermine the foundations of 'traditional' values, behaviours and identities (Weeks 1989, : 304).

Jeffery Weeks is surely the foundational figure in sexuality research in the UK and Worldwide. I begin with this quote to highlight the changes wrought in social attitudes and in the legislative regulation of sexualities over the period since the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967 with the Wolfenden Report and the following Sexual Offences Act. In *The World we have Won* (Weeks 2007, : 12), he writes about these changes in the UK.

[T]he world we have won has made possible ways of life that represent an advance not a decline in human relationships (p. 7)

[H]eterosexuality is not only a preference; it is an institution, so embedded in the ways we think and act that it is almost invisible unless you try to escape it. Homosexuality may have come out into the open, it may have made institutionalized heterosexuality porous, but ... it is still subjected to the minoritizing forces that excluded it in the first place. (p.12)

Heterosexuality, as an institution, is so embedded in the ways we think and act that it's almost invisible until you try to escape it. Thus, the invisibility of the dominant – heterosexuality – is similar, in some ways, to the invisibility of whiteness in white dominated societies.

The 1980s, with Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, was, as Weeks says, a nadir in the struggle for 'homosexual' (to use the words in the Section) in the UK. The Sections specified that

A local authority shall not

A, intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality or

B, promote the teaching in any maintained schools of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship. (Local Government Act 1988: S28)

The Section set a tone, an ethos, for schools in which people felt that it was unsafe to talk about homosexuality, in spite of the fact that it did not actually mention teachers or even schools. It also led to huge levels of protest and the coming out of various celebrities and many ordinary people as well. Indeed, Jackie Stacey (1991) argues convincingly that, rather than ‘Promoting Normality’ (the title of her chapter), a key result of Section 28 was the achievement of just the opposite. Certainly, it was part of the cultural and social shift that Weeks traces in *The World we have Won*.

There were a number of pieces of legislation passed in the years following Section 28 which contributed to this shift (see table 1).

Year	Legislation	Party in power	What it did
1988	S28, Local Government Act	Conservative	Prohibited ‘promotion of homosexuality’ and of ‘pretended family relationships’ by Local Authorities (local government bodies)
2000	Ethical Standards in Public Life (Scotland) Act	Labour (Scotland)	Repealed Section 28 in Scotland
2001	Sexual Offences Act	Labour	Equalised the age of consent to sex at 16 for everyone. Adopted by the Scottish Parliament the same year.
2003	Local Government Act	Labour	Repealed Section 28 in England and Wales
2004	Civil Partnership Act	Labour	Introduced civil partnerships for same sex couples with most (but not all) of the same rights as heterosexual couples. Came into force in 2005.

2006	Equality Act	Labour	Allowed government to introduce regulations outlawing discrimination on grounds of sexuality
2006	Sexual Orientation Regulations	Labour	Outlawed discrimination on grounds of 'sexual orientation' in the provision of goods, services, facilities, education and public functions
2010	Equality Act	Labour	Brought all other equalities legislation and regulations together in one Act. Included an exemption on grounds of sex discrimination until 2030 for the selection of parliamentary candidates by political parties (so they can have all female or all male shortlists).
2013	Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act	Conservative	Allows marriage (rather than civil partnership) to same sex couples in England and Wales, while allowing religious organisations to opt into doing ceremonies. Comes into force in 2014.
2013	Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill	Scottish National Party	Aims to allow same sex marriage in Scotland while protecting the rights of religious groups not to carry out ceremonies.

Table 1: Legislation concerning homosexuality in the UK, 1988-2013

As can be seen, the change in the approach of Government between 1988 and 2013 has been enormous. David Cameron, himself, has moved from supporting the prohibition of the 'promotion of homosexuality' to insisting on the proposal of equal marriage in parliament, going against many of his own MPs and the Tory heartlands in the process.

There have, as Weeks argues, also been tremendous changes in social attitudes, as shown by the British and Scottish social attitudes surveys (see table 2).

Table 2.6 Attitudes towards same-sex relationships, Scotland and England, 2000, 2005 and 2010

Same-sex relationships	2000	2005	2010
Scotland	%	%	%
Always/mostly wrong	48	40	27
Not wrong at all	29	35	50
Base	1663	1519	1488
England	%	%	%
Always/mostly wrong	46	40	29
Not wrong at all	34	37	44
Base	2887	1794	913

Source for Scotland: Scottish Social Attitudes

Base for England: British Social Attitudes respondents living in England

Table 2: Attitudes towards same sex relationships, 2000, 2005, 2010

Changing legislation and social attitudes raise the question of whether it is still worth being concerned with questions of sexuality as an equality issue. Raymond Williams (1977) proposes three currents of ideology in relation to societal issues – the emergent, the dominant and the residual. He argues that emergent attitudes might be progressive or reactionary, but are new; the dominant is whatever is currently accepted as common sense; and the residual are the left over attitudes from the past. These three currents are, he said, always in contention and what is residual or emergent may become dominant.

In relation to sexuality, Weeks (2007) describes three traps that people can fall into in this regard. Trap number one, he suggests, is the assumption that progress and change in the direction of equality is inevitable and automatic. Trap number two is to believe that everything is in some kind of decline from a state of grace. We can see that vividly in the moral panic about sexualisation and how that focuses particularly on young girls and young women without thinking at all about gender relations or power. Trap number three is the conviction that nothing has changed and that the legislation and evidence of the social attitudes surveys are nothing more than window dressing. I would add to this, a fourth trap, which is to believe that what is true of the UK, is inevitably, true of the world – though this belief is severely challenged by news about severe discrimination against

LGBT people in Russia and some African countries. The picture is patchy, even within one country, as evidence of the reintroduction of Section 28 type policies in several academy schools in England demonstrates (British Humanist Association 2013, , accessed 23 August 2013)

Defining homophobia

Defining homophobia is much less simple than might appear on first sight. Clearly, the murder of Mathew Shepard and the demonstrations held at his funeral by members of the Christian Right (see figure 1) are indubitably homophobic.



Figure 1: Demonstration outside Mathew Shepard's funeral
(<http://www.westernreservepublicmedia.org/education/webquests/teacher/crossroads/protest.jpg>: accessed 23 August 2013)

In this context, homophobia is driven by religion, but that is not inevitably the case, as can be seen in the homophobic chants of, for example, football supporters at matches (alongside racist and misogynist one). Homophobia, thus, includes overt hate speech and acts, but it is important to think about

heteronormativity as well. The invisibility of homosexuality and heteronormative bullying should be included in this.

One can find a range of definitions on the web. One is that homophobia is insecurity about being heterosexual. Others believe that the gibe 'you're so gay' is an expression of homophobia. Elsewhere, I have described the way in which middle class boys deployed homophobic discourse in order to attack working class homophobia by claiming that a particular homophobic bully in their year was gay (2003). The use of such terms of abuse by children and young people does not necessarily mean that they are themselves homophobic, but deploying such terms as forms of abuse is part of a discourse of derision concerning a stigmatised groups and those discourse of derision change both temporally in time and geographically (see, also, Epstein 1993, in relation to racism). Thus terms of abuse that are used now are not necessarily those used ten years ago or in the mid or early mid 20th century. Stephen Minton (these conference proceedings) has coined the useful term 'alterophobia' to describe how children of key in to difference in their struggles with each other and it is important that in dealing with homophobia we do not focus simply on this form of stigmatisation but on the whole notion of stigmatising difference and the intersectionality of such stigmatised groups. they are not the terms of abuse we used then either in relation to race or necessarily in relation to sexuality, although some things do continue you know we still have em eh ... sluts we still have ... words of abuse which are deployed which come from a long way back. Em so ... you know let's I think one of the things that Stephen was talking about this morning in alteraphobia was the way that children often do bully others for difference.

As we saw, in the UK young people are changing and, using the proxy of support for same sex marriage, it is clear as older people, are less supportive of same sex marriage than younger ones and, in general, those with higher levels of education are more supportive than those who are less educated (Clements 2013).

Mark McCormack's book, *The Declining Significance of Homophobia*, (2012) reports on his ethnographic study in three schools in south west of England, where he found no homophobia. I would ask why he did not find it when virtually everybody else working now and in the last 20 years has found extensive homophobia. I believe the reasons to be partly because

there really has been a change in young people's attitudes, as demonstrated the figures cited by Clements (2013), but this is not the whole story. There is also the fact that he was looking at young people in the sixth form, doing A-levels, and the difference that having higher levels of education makes. But I would also suggest that his definition of homophobia was rather narrow. In contrast, Mike Ward (2013) found extensive homophobia in the Welsh Valleys. However, one of the groups of young men he worked with ethnographically, whom he called the 'geeks', were more academic and less directly expressive of homophobia than the more 'laddish' groups. But what he shows is how they were also recuperating hetero-normativity and their own heterosexuality all the time, even though they would never express it as a as homophobia. Similarly, Stonewall has reported that, while there have been improvements, two-thirds of LGBT students said they were bullied at school and this figure rose to 75 per cent in faith schools, while more than 80% had heard homophobic language eh language more than half reported feeling uncomfortable and unable to be themselves in school (Guasp 21012).

Conclusion

As is clear, the situation worldwide is patchy. While things have certainly improved in some places, they remain difficult and dangerous for LGBT people elsewhere. A brief comparison by country shows this. In Britain same-sex marriage has been introduced and there are civil partnerships in Ireland and in some states in the US, though in others the legislators are passing homophobic legislation. Russia, as has been much publicised in the run-up to the next Olympics, has introduced homophobic legislation. The situation in a range of countries can be seen in table 3 below.

Gloom for gays

Male homosexuality and the law

Country	Legal status*	Penalty	
Egypt	Not specifically outlawed	Prison	Gays prosecuted under other laws
Indonesia	Illegal in sharia-ruled areas	Prison	Hardliners broke up international gay-rights meeting in 2010
Iraq	Not specifically outlawed	None	Self-proclaimed sharia judges issue death sentences; militias kidnap and kill gays
Iran	Illegal	Lashes, death	New draft law may limit the prosecution of consensual sex
Jordan	Legal	None	Gays prosecuted under other laws
Malaysia	Illegal	Prison	Sodomy law under discussion following Anwar Ibrahim's acquittal
Morocco	Illegal	Fine	A gay tourist hotspot despite the prohibition
Nigeria	Illegal in sharia-ruled areas	Death	Some Christians also back new gay-marriage ban
Pakistan	Illegal	Prison	Man-boy sex tolerated in some tribal areas
Saudi Arabia	Illegal	Fine, lashes, death	Death penalty applied if man is married
Turkey	Legal	None	Gay groups allowed to operate openly but some police harassment under morality laws

Sources: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association; *The Economist*

*2012

Table 3: The situation with regard to the law and gay male sex.

The picture is not uniform across the world or actually across any individual country. So there is still much to be achieved in the UK, in Ireland and across the world.

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Debbie Epstein is Professor of Education at Cardiff University. She is interested in understanding 'differences that make a difference' in people's lives (*Schooling Sexualities*, p4) and how the dominant is held in place. She has published extensively on sexuality and gender in education and was one of the editors of *Gender and Education* for six years until May 2013. Originally from South Africa, she has been involved in significant work there, co-authoring *Towards Gender Equality: Gender and Sexuality in South African Schools during the HIV and AIDS Epidemic*. She and Robert Morrell brought together the special issue of *Gender and Education: Thinking South, Thinking South African Education*. Her current collaborative research (with Jane Kenway and others) is on *Elite Independent Schools in Globalising Circumstances: A Multi-Sited Ethnography*: <http://education.monash.edu.au/research/eliteschools>

World Café:

Key Insights and Future Directions

All conference delegates and presenters were involved in the World Café Session. Each delegate took part in a discussion about each topic.

There were five main topics:

- LGBT students and students of same-sex parented families
- LGBT teachers
- School Policy and Management
- Curriculum and Teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- Initial Teacher Education and Pre-Service Teachers

Each topic discussion was facilitated by an expert in the field and following this, a key issue and key question were decided upon to aid the summary discussion in the closing session.

What follows is an outline of the key issues discussed and questions raised in the various group discussions about each topic.

Topic 1: LGBT Students and Students of Same-Sex Parented Families

Group Facilitator: Carol-Anne O'Brien

Carol-Anne O' Brien is the Advocacy Coordinator of BeLonG To, Ireland's national organisation for LGBT young people. Carol-Anne has a PhD in social work, and joined BeLonG To in 2009, after many years of work on LGBT youth issues in Toronto.

Key Issue:

Some students are 'coming out' in school and being supported, however, there is an overwhelming invisibility of LGBT issues in schools

Key Question:

How can student voices be heard and listened to?

Some other issues discussed/questions raised:

Culture of Schools and Society

- Schools are changing as society changes.
- Gender norms are restrictive and exclusionary.
- Heteronormativity works in subtle ways.
- There are significant gaps in curriculum. Lack of curriculum that reflects LGBT lives.
- Lack of guidance and other support.
- Shouldn't have to ask for support.
- RSE at primary level does not reflect LGBT students.
- Culture in school still affected by authoritarian paradigm.
- LGBT students' experiences at schools are low on list of priorities - feel powerless.
- There is a lack of appreciation of what students go through in same-sex relationships and coming out.
- Pressure on students to 'fit into box' and get points.

- Homophobic/heterosexist language makes students feel invisible/less significant.
- Homophobic/heterosexist language comes from wider society.
- Need to examine the home/school/community nexus.

Students

- Student voices aren't heard – need spaces for this to happen.
- Students want faster changes.
- Students hear that to be LGBT is a bad thing.
- Students experience homophobic bullying in various forms.
- Students experience pressure and oppression.
- Severe isolation and risk of suicide.
- Coming out is a hugely significant process for LGBT students.
- Young people want someone to stand up.
- Students have fear of being rejected.

Parents

- Need more visibility of same-sex parented families.
- Need to hear from parents of LGBT students.
- There is a lot of resistance to making family diversity more visible.

Teachers

- Young people see teachers as 'square', behind the times.
- Students feel teachers would not support them.
- In general, teachers are very conservative.
- Many teachers are not interrupting homophobic bullying or supporting LGBT students.

Topic 2: LGBT Teachers

Group Facilitator: Odhrán Allen

Odhrán Allen has been working as Director of Mental Health with GLEN since 2006. He is a qualified occupational therapist and is the current Chairperson of the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI), is the Occupational Therapy representative on the Health and Social Care Professional Council (CORU) and is a member of the Occupational Therapists Registration Board. Prior to working with GLEN, he worked with the AOTI and practiced as a mental health occupational therapist. He is currently a member of the National Office for Suicide Prevention 'Reach Out' Implementation Committee, the HSE National LGBT Health Advisory Committee and the HSE Transgender Health Committee.

Key Issue:

Pervasive culture of heteronormativity in Irish schools and how this affects teachers

Key Question:

How can transgender issues be better included in the discussion?

Some other issues discussed/questions raised:

Culture of Schools

- Need to challenge the idea that children are vulnerable around LGBT teachers.
- Teachers who are not out are listening to comments in staff room and classroom. This inhibits coming out.
- The heteronormative environment of schools regardless of ethos.
- “Actual ethos” and perception of “ethos”.
- Large school v small school – easier to be open about your identity and private life with colleagues than in smaller rural school.
- Schools have to be explicit with teachers that “you are welcome to be who you are” and “you will be supported”.

- Conflict – section 37 allows school to discriminate but the same school is supposed to implement anti-homophobic bullying policy and educate for valuing difference.
- Need to look at the ‘morality’ question and the diversity of moral views and how to manage that diversity. Need to understand how we talk about ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’.
- How does the school work as a marketplace – competing for students, results etc. Does this affect the experience of the LGBT teacher?
- Heterosexuality is framed as a preference when it’s actually institutionalised. Need for more work on the culture in schools. It is assumed as the norm for teachers and students to be heterosexual but LGBT challenges this norm and this puts LGBT teachers in vulnerable position.

Section 37.1 and Ethos

- Employment protection in context of 37.1.
- At interview have to be careful/put on a façade to get a job.
- Anxiety created by section 37.1 – perception of it applying to people where it doesn’t apply (e.g. VEC schools).
- E.g. U.S. teacher getting fired recently.
- Need for education of staff regarding rights and responsibilities. There should be clear information for teachers at induction.
- Section 37.1 – exemption – affects what issues can be talked about in class and teachers have to conceal their identity: the “chill factor”.
- Part-time teachers are particularly vulnerable.
- LGBT teachers not safe – will jeopardise their career.
- Section 37.1 – absence of legal protection open to discrimination and ethos can be used to justify this.
- How can the “chill factor” be addressed in schools and disseminate good practice on addressing this?
- Ethos is given more kudos than it deserves. It is often not implemented – need to look at lived ethos versus written ethos. All stakeholders in the school can contribute to creating the issue.

Teachers

- Uniqueness of LGBT teacher – plumber protected but teacher not! What is unique about the LGBT teacher?
- Transgender teachers – most don't choose a career or transgender teachers quit in order to be able to transition –work is too difficult to negotiate.
- Privacy and secrecy – if choose to keep private this is different from having to hide and keep secret.
- Barriers created by secret vs. private and the effect on your relationship with colleagues and students.

Impact on Students

- Need to look at how the current situation for LGBT teachers affects the pedagogical relationship with students.
- Not being able to be open about who you are as a teacher affects how you educate students and your relationship with them as their educator.
- Need to look at the protectionist ideas, teaching people under 18. Need to challenge the notion that students could be changed recruited or harmed by LGBT teachers.

Topic 3: School Policy and Management

Group Facilitator: Pádraig Flanagan

Pádraig Flanagan is Principal of Castletroy College, a co- educational secondary school of almost 1200 students under the auspices of Co. Limerick VEC. He has worked over many years to promote inclusive education and equality of opportunity for all young people. Pádraig is currently Vice President of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD).

Key Issue:

Urgent need to make heteronormality awareness a reality - RSE policy – particularly primary.

Key Question:

Who makes it happen? RSE will do some but whose responsibility is it?

Some other issues discussed/questions raised:

- Much needs to be done in the area of policy related to LGBT sexualities at primary and post-primary levels.
- There needs to be a review of RSE school policies to make schools aware of heteronormativity and the power relations at work.
- Consistency is not possible through school intervention alone, must be through community.
- Schools need the confidence to make this a whole school responsibility.
- There is a need for positive policy to address these issues and set out school approaches.
- There is a need to start early – in primary schools. RSE at primary level is one avenue for this change but need for the education of management about the issues.
- ‘Appropriateness’ needs to be teased out and understood so it doesn’t serve as a barrier to inclusivity.
- Mentioning of transgender is tokenistic – need for real discussion.
- There needs to be a whole school approach – the school community is a means of fostering care for all.

- There should be space created for schools and parents to discuss patronage. This doesn't happen and there is no space for reflection on the issues.
- Parents need to be included in discussions regarding ethos.
- Positive attitudes to same-sex relationships need to be reflected in school approaches. There should be a general focus on respect.

Topic 4: Curriculum and Teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Group Facilitator: Martha Sweeney

Martha Sweeney has over twenty years experience of teaching at Post Primary level. She is seconded since 2000 to the SPHE Support Service and works as Regional Manager with responsibility for delivering in-service to teachers, school management and whole staffs. She has also worked nationally as a trainer of teachers in Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) both at Primary and Post Primary levels. She also delivers Child Protection Training nationally to School personnel and Boards of Management. Martha is a graduate of Mater Dei has a Masters from NUIG in Health Promotion and a Post Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling from UL.

Key Issue:

Within curriculum, homosexuality taught as 'other' rather than having whole range of human sexualities discussed.

Key Question:

Should we replace current curriculum with a broader, deeper study of human sexuality, family relationships and intimate relationships (taking culture, sociology, psychology etc into account)?

Some other issues discussed/questions raised:

RSE Curriculum

- There is need for radical change of RSE material. Currently, homosexuality – if mentioned – is included as 'other' to the normal heterosexuality. Sexuality needs to be taught about as a range of sexualities and heterosexuality should be just seen as one of these.
- There needs to be discussion about heterosexuality and heteronormativity in terms of gender norms and the underlying causes of homophobia and heterosexism.
- Need to educate from a different perspective – explorations of how sexuality is understood in different places at different times, the history of sexuality, ideas from Freud, a sociological perspective.

- Sex is only talked about in terms of reproductive sex. There should be space for discussion about pleasure.
- Curriculum needs to ask questions about transgender, sexual identity, same-sex marriage etc.
- There is an urgent need to develop good primary level materials, training and research.

Teaching and Teachers

- In current teaching, children are socialised into being hetero/sexual. Children learn that the norm is to be heterosexual.
- Teachers often assume that children are heterosexual or come from heterosexual families.
- The approaches of teachers need to be given space for discussion and teachers need to be encouraged to be reflexive and to look at their values and how they influence how they teach. Teachers should be encouraged to look for the things they are not currently aware of in their teaching.
- The homogenous nature of the teaching profession is problematical.
- There are homophobic cultures in many staffrooms.
- All subject teachers have responsibility to students – not just teachers of RSE or SPHE.
- The teaching of RSE needs to engage students – it needs to be seen as meaningful for their lives.
- There needs to be an emphasis on equipping the pre-service teacher to teach RSE.
- Teachers need to be educated so that they have confidence to teach about sexualities.
- There is not a lack of good will among teachers, rather, they are not equipped to teach this and are often extremely uncomfortable.
- All students need to be asked what they want to learn about sexuality.
- Perhaps outside facilitators from advocacy groups might be useful in helping to present the realities of LGBT lives.

Schools and Management Approaches/School Ethos

- For RSE to be taught properly in schools, there needs to be openness about 'ethos' and what this means for the school policies and approaches to LGBT sexualities. The Education Act requires all children to be treated equally – how can this be assured?
- There needs to be proper provision for RSE as a core subject of the school curriculum – the timetable should not be a barrier.
- A whole school RSE policy should be mandatory.
- Exam subjects should not get priority – there should be emphasis on the holistic development of the student.
- RSE is not valued – how can RSE be valued more?
- Child sexualities are a contentious issue and appropriateness at primary level is a significant issue. There needs to be more dialogue about appropriate entry points of discussion so that appropriateness doesn't preclude discussion.
- RSE needs to be looked at in 5th class in primary school re LGBT issues because this is the age at which children are thinking about their sexuality.
- Teachers don't feel they have permission to teach about LGBT issues, same-sex parented families.
- There needs to be more work in local contexts on what school ethos means and what are its implications.
- The patron body needs to be involved in these discussions.
- Need to open up the fact that in most schools the mission statement conflicts with academic excellence and the everyday practices of the schools.
- Need to discuss the ways in which ethos works in schools. Teachers often hide behind ethos in order not to tackle homophobia.
- There is an opportunity to open up these discussions through the school inspectorate.

Topic 5: Initial Teacher Education and Pre-Service Teachers

Group Facilitator: Dr Patricia Mannix-McNamara

Dr Patricia Mannix McNamara is a lecturer in the Department of Education and Professional Studies and co-director for the Research Centre in Education and Professional Practice (RECEPP), in the University of Limerick. In addition to her course directorships of the Graduate Diploma in Health Education and Promotion and the Diploma in Drug and Alcohol Studies, she pursues a lively research agenda that includes teacher professionalism and identity; school policy and practice; bullying (both workplace and school based), and health promotion.

Key Issue:

There is a lack of national coherence in terms of teacher education for SPHE and the HEI's can't abdicate responsibility.

Key Questions:

What are the set of principles that matter in the education of teachers? How can we look at our own hidden curriculum in teacher education?

Some other issues discussed/questions raised:

Key Issues/Problems

- SPHE/RSE is far down on the subject pecking order for pre-service teachers.
- There is limited time for SPHE on ITE timetable.
- Teacher educators find it a tough task to get pre-service teachers to relate gender and identity to SPHE and to their pedagogy.
- There is an underestimation of time it takes to make young people and their educators feel safe and comfortable in engaging with these issues.
- Colleges of education are heteronormative environments.
- Very often there is fear of mentioning LGBT issues.
- There is often no presence of LGBT students on campus – this is significant.
- There is a lack of openness on the courses to have discussions about these issues.

- Parents send their children to school for more than subject specialism – a holistic education, an ethics of care.
- There is a problem with sex/sexuality issues being taught about by outside agencies as if not central to the business of school.
- Where is the space for the voices of parents regarding ITE?
- Age/maturity is a factor. There is a belief that that this issue changes with age – is that really the case?
- ITE is in a very unique position and has a responsibility to take these issues very seriously.
- The preparation of pre-service teachers to deal with the complexity of these issues is inadequate.

Key Ideas/Questions for Change

- LGBT/sexuality issues should be embedded and mainstreamed in foundation studies in ITE.
- Need to work with sociology to link to gender and wider sociological issues.
- There is a need for more Sociology of Education space on the ITE curriculum for teachers to look at privilege and power relations.
- The idea of the teachers as deliverer of curriculum only is a problem.
- Teacher educators need to be reflexive about their own predispositions.
- Need for discussion about/across the various ITE programmes and their approaches to these issues.
- There is a need to make the links clear as to how these issues relate to whole school and other subjects.
- Need for discussion about ‘ethos’ in relation to these issues in colleges of education with religious ethos.
- How does ITE engage with instrumentalism in Education?
- The “encultured nature of what it means to be a teacher” needs to be radically overhauled and the Department of Education and Skills plays a role in this regard.
- Pre-service teachers need to be given space to think about sexualities without curriculum per se prescribing – a step back from curriculum delivery model.
- Pre-service teachers need to be encouraged to critically reflect on politics of sexuality rather than a prevention model.

- How/where do we find the spaces in ITE to open up to a critical discourse?
- How are cross-curricular connections to be made – what would this look like? How do we facilitate this disposition in ITE and schools?
- How do we find a language through popular culture?
- How do we open dialogue in very conservative environments?
- This is not up to the individual to take leadership – this requires a cultural shift.
- These issues need to be championed centrally – there needs to be national leadership in ITE and through the Teaching Council of Ireland.
- Is it the case that these issues must be mainstreamed in order to be valued?
- How can teachers be supported to bridge the gap between teacher education and the culture of schools?
- Is there potential in the relationship between school and university in the teaching practice placement?
- How do we ensure competence in delivering SPHE/RSE?

