

The Construction of and Resistance to the Stigmatisation of Sexualities: Gay and Lesbian Education in the Classroom

Executive Summary:

The formal curriculum in primary and secondary schools fails to provide education on sexualities while the hidden curriculum is full of prejudice and hostility against gays and lesbians. Sex education discourses are dominated by heterosexual hegemony and homophobia. If we are not aware of these, we are likely to become accomplices of sexual violence.

This action research is based on the cooperation of the teacher in school and the researchers outside school. Together they design a class on gay and lesbian education in order to help students to understand and accept different sexualities. In the process of course development, the teacher tries to understand, through interaction with students, how the mainstream culture constructs stereotypes of gays and lesbians. Then the teacher discusses with the researchers and designs a class in gay and lesbian education that combines with students' experiences. In class, the teacher is in charge of teaching activities and one of the researchers observes and traces the outcome of the class by interviews and questionnaires. Such a class can create an educational environment that is a gay and lesbian friendly and gender equal.

The research aims are:

1. Analysing the stereotypes of gays and lesbians in class in order to understand how stigmatisation of sexualities is constructed;
2. Enhancing critical thinking of teachers and students and changing mainstream knowledge in schools by doing action research;
3. Providing a useful teaching resource for teachers in schools.

This paper will demonstrate the thinking process of course development, the tension in the interaction between the teacher and students in class, and the reaction of students. Finally, we will draw conclusions on some principles in conducting gay and lesbian education.

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