



Moving Beyond the Binary in Comprehensive Sexual Health Education: Notes for Physical and Health Educators from Parents and Guardians Across Canada

Dr. LeAnne Petherick,

Contact author: leanne.petherick@ubc.ca

Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4, Canada

Jasmin Lundy,

Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4, Canada

Dr. Moss Norman,

Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4, Canada

Julia Nord-Leth,

Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6, Canada

Abstract

Background: Gendered understandings of bodies, movement and health are not written into PHE curricula but they have a legacy within in PHE. These discourses of gender are always shifting within pedagogy and policy. As a result, PHE teachers engaging in comprehensive sexual health education are working to support 2SLGBTQ+ students and engage all students in sexuality education. How this unfolds remains relatively unknown. In general, how sexual health curricular topics are interpreted and delivered, if at all, remain poorly understood (Black et al., 2024). Furthermore, there is concern from teachers for how parents and guardians receive, interpret and expect teachers to delivery sexual health education curriculum (Walker et al., 2020). This research uncovers how parents from three provinces in Canada approach, respond to and hope educators, including PHE educators, continue to challenge binary gendered understandings of healthy relationships, bodies and sexuality so there is more, not less sexuality education in schools.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights into parents and guardian's perspectives about sexuality education. Semi-structured interviews with adults from British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec (n=56) who were parenting young people between the ages of nine and 18, were participants in this study. Critical discourse analysis was employed to analyze data (Fairclough, 2001).

Results and Conclusion: Three themes are centred in this presentation. First, expanding current discussions of sexuality education to affirm students' identities. Second, schools are spaces to support young people's engagement with sexuality education; and third, valuing teachers who are willing to expand conversations about binary gendered understandings are notes many parents offered. In conclusion, respect for the progressive approaches being employed in school contexts and supporting educators who are providing safe, respectful and affirmative learning in sexuality education is the work that is happening in schools to support young people's engagement with sexuality education.

Keywords: Gender; 2SLGBTQ+; Sexuality; Physical and Health Education



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