

Competences of physical education students concerning sexual health to support a positive ethical climate

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INTRODUCTION

Research showed that several pupils experienced sexual harassment from physical education (PE) teachers (Bajema & Bonink, 2002; Zonnenberg & Roelofsen, 2011) and LGB pupils feel unsafe and even experience violence in school (Mooij, 2013). Recently, the attention for sexual harassment and LGB safety in schools became obligatory by Dutch law (Ministry OCW, 2015). To signal and respond adequately to sexual harassment, knowledge about sexual development, healthy sexual behavior and sexual harassment is crucial for teachers (Movisie, 2014). However, in a recent study among teacher training colleges, the attention for LGB and sexuality in the curricula seemed to be too superficial and not structural embedded (School & Safety, 2014).

AIM

The aim of this study is to find out what competences graduating PE students have developed to support a positive ethical climate concerning sexual health and LGB-safety, among their (future) pupils in school.

METHODS

This study follows a cross-sectional design using a survey among 102 students in their final year of the PE teacher training of Windesheim, University of Applied Sciences in Zwolle, The Netherlands. The questionnaire, based on Zonnenberg & Roelofsen (2011), Hartog (2008) and De Graaf e.a. (2012) measures competences concerning the attitude, knowledge and capability to realize LGB safety, sexual integrity and to deal adequately with sexual behavior. Cases such as in figure 1 and 2 are submitted to the survey.



Figure 1 & 2. Examples of sexual behavior. Left: two boys of 12 and 17 years of age stimulate each other in the changing room, with mutual consent. Right: A boy touches the breasts of a team player during a team hug after winning. She is not amused (Reprinted from: Frans & Franck, 2013).

RESULTS

76 students (61 males, 15 females) completed the questionnaire, rate 77,5%. The mean age was 22,3 years (SD 1,6, range 20-27).

LGB safety The majority (68%) does not or hardly know about the issue of LGB pupils feeling unsafe in school. Religious students (50%) find kissing gay and lesbian couples more offensive than their non-religious peers ($p \leq .01$), see table 1.

	Agree	Agree Religion is important	Agree Religion isn't important	χ^2	df	p
I find it offensive if I see...						
two men kissing	46%	33%	13%	9.249	2	.010*
two women kissing	30%	22%	8%	9.500	2	.009*
man and woman kissing	16%	9%	7%	1.170	2	.557

*significant correlation $p \leq .01$

Table 1. Students' attitude towards homo-, lesbian and heterosexual expressions

Dealing with sexual behavior The majority feels confident about his or her capability to recognize healthy (60%) and cross-border (71%) sexual behavior among pupils. Nevertheless, 49% feels insecure about their ability to react properly in case of such behavior. 79% doesn't feel uncomfortable discussing sexual issues with pupils. Nevertheless, one third finds sexuality a subject too personal to talk about in PE class.

Sexual integrity 51% of the students cannot identify unintended sexual cross-border behavior by the PE teacher from a practical example.

Figure 3. The teacher touches his pupils during the PE lesson. Some of the pupils don't want this but feel uncomfortable telling him (Reprinted from: Frans & Franck, 2013).



CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

This research shows that knowledge and attitude regarding LGB, especially of religious students, are not sufficient to realize a positive ethical climate for LGB pupils. The attitude of most students is positive towards discussing sexuality with their pupils and students feel confident about their capability to signal sexual behavior. On the other hand, many students find themselves not capable to react properly in case of sexual behavior. Most students are limited aware about their own risk to show sexually offensive behavior. The inference is obvious: students can optimize their competences to create a positive ethical climate concerning sexual health and LGB safety in school. Recommendation is to pay structural and more profound attention to sexual health, sexual integrity and LGB safety in the curriculum of the PE teacher training.