

TEACHER TRAINING ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR PREPARATION OF THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TO DELIVER COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL SETTING: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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BACKGROUND

Pre-service training in comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) creates a foundation for the future teacher to confidently, competently and inclusively deliver sexuality education in the school context. Although CSE is commonly delivered by teachers in schools, numerous studies highlight that they feel ill-prepared to teach this subject area.¹⁻¹⁴ Research has found that teachers desire CSE training during the pre-service period and view it as essential for enhancing self-efficacy to deliver sexological concepts to their future students.^{3,8,11,15} Furthermore, teachers invite the inclusion of specific education and pedagogies to combat heterosexism and homophobia in school settings.^{5,13}

School students themselves report that teacher delivery of CSE is often negative, gendered and heteronormative. They cite a lack of sex positivity, outdated content and poor teaching strategies as reasons for ineffectual delivery.^{12,16} CSE is also viewed as less important in schools in contrast to other subject areas.^{3,6,12}

AIM: To explore the extent to which teacher training organisations, responsible for initial teacher training, prepare pre-service teachers to deliver CSE in the school setting.

METHOD

A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted and reported in accordance with PRISMA guidelines. Five electronic databases were searched to identify publications (2000-2018) that reported provision of pre-service CSE training by teacher training organisations. Subsequently, a descriptive analysis was executed to summarise the scope of teacher training related to CSE.

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RESULTS

Twenty-two documents, primarily from the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America were identified for review. Whilst information regarding pre-service CSE training was available, the level of detail provided was variable.

Overall, this SLR reported eight themes:

- **THE SCOPE OF SEXUALITY EDUCATION IS EXPANDING.** Examples of high-quality pre-service CSE training are culturally sensitive and address an expanding repertoire of contemporary sexological issues.
- **ILL-PREPAREDNESS CONTINUES.** Pre-service CSE training is extremely limited. Minimal teaching hours are dedicated to the subject and content is commonly narrow in scope.
- **ADEQUATE PREPARATION INCREASES CONFIDENCE.** Exposure to specific pre-service CSE training is associated with greater self-efficacy to teach this subject area.
- **BARRIERS TO CSE IMPLEMENTATION.** Commonly cited barriers include limited opportunity to provide CSE content within existing pre-service curricula, CSE viewed as a low priority, funding shortfalls and an absence of CSE minimum teacher preparation standards in most jurisdictions.
- **VARIABILITY OF PRACTICE.** There is wide variability of content and instructional methods across and within institutions globally. This also extends to the positioning of the subject as either a core or elective topic.
- **COST OF INACTION.** Teacher training organisations are underpreparing pre-service teachers to the realities facing their future students.
- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE.** Teachers hold a pivotal role in the personal and social development of their students and there is marked opportunity to improve pre-service training in CSE.
- **TOWARDS BEST PRACTICE.** Greater transparency and collaboration of effective pre-service CSE training programs is required.

CONCLUSION

To date, our understanding of how pre-service teachers are supported to deliver CSE in schools has been limited. Focused research regarding pre-service CSE training and greater transparency of current programs is required. Moreover, health and educational policies that mandate pre-service CSE training are needed. Collectively, these strategies would strengthen the capacity of teachers to effectively deliver CSE in the school context

WANT MORE INFO?

For information about Australian pre-service training in comprehensive sexuality education, please visit www.rseproject.org.au or email RSEProject@curtin.edu.au