# Mapping Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Inclusion through Curriculum and Practice in a Canadian Teacher Education Program

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## Abstract

Through a faculty-wide program enhancement campaign implemented in a British Columbia university, we investigated sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) awareness and inclusion in a Canadian teacher education program. Comparing data from curriculum mapping of course outlines, close analysis of a departmental cross-section of 49 undergraduate syllabi, exit survey data, and 20 interviews with faculty and staff involved in the program, we observed how sustained conversation at all levels of program delivery is indispensable. Curriculum hours of formal SOGI-specific instruction were limited, yet most teacher candidates self-reported that they felt sufficiently prepared to support non-heteronormative students. Findings indicated that SOGI inclusion relies less on formal curriculum than the responsiveness of educators—under sway of progressive policy

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changes—to have informal, identity-inclusive conversations and to forge connections to curriculum content.

*Keywords:* teacher education, sexual orientation and gender identity, inclusive education, curriculum policy, classroom discourse

## Résumé

Dans le cadre d'une campagne d'amélioration du programme menée à l'échelle du corps professoral dans une université de la Colombie-Britannique, nous avons enquêté sur la sensibilisation à l'orientation sexuelle et l'identité de genre et sur son inclusion dans un programme de formation des enseignants canadiens. En comparant les données des plans de cours de cartographie du programme d'études, l'analyse approfondie d'un échantillon de 49 programmes, les résultats d'enquêtes de sortie et de 20 entretiens avec le corps professoral et le personnel participant au programme, nous avons observé la qualité des conversations à tous les niveaux de la prestation du programme indispensable. Le nombre d'heures du programme d'enseignement formel spécifique à SOGI était limité, mais la plupart des candidats enseignants ont déclaré s'être déclarés suffisamment préparés pour soutenir des élèves non hétéronormés. Les résultats ont montré que l'inclusion de SOGI dépend moins du curriculum formel que de la réactivité des éducateurs—sous l'influence de changements de politique progressifs—pour avoir des conversations informelles incluant l'identité et pour tisser des liens avec le contenu du curriculum.

*Mots-clés :* formation des enseignants, orientation sexuelle et identité de genre, éducation inclusive, politique en matière de curriculum, discours en classe

# Introduction

The groundswell of change around the public concept of gender and the mistreatment of persons with non-binary gender expression finally reached the legislative capital of Canada by 2016 with Bill C-16, which adds "gender identity or expression" to two sections in the Canadian Human Rights Act where "sexual orientation" had already been integrated. This small though significant addition to the legal code signifies both recognition of gender as a spectrum and of the basic human right to identify outside of the heteronormative conventions of male or female. Gender can be fluid and dynamic, rather than fixed at birth, and new laws indicate that there will be recourse against discrimination on this basis or on any intersectional concerns related to "race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or conviction of an offence for which a pardon has been granted" (Walker, 2016, para. 19). This change has had a ripple effect, empowering public institutions to recognize their leadership role in the prevention of harmful gender norms and sexual stereotypes, and making it possible to address these systemic issues systematically in line with public policy. Education is an important field where this type of social change toward a more just and inclusive society can be implemented; but, as Rayside (2014) claims, school policy response has been "distinctly cautious compared to actual societal change on these schools" (p. 191).

Passing through provincial education systems, this ripple effect spurred on multilevel policy changes and initiatives. The British Columbia government followed suit (Bill 27, 2016) and incorporated sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) into its regulatory charter, the Schools Act. The timing was auspicious insofar as BC's curriculum was already undergoing a process of complete renewal. The ministry was in the early stages of a two-year roll out of BC's New Curriculum (Province of British Columbia, 2018a, paras. 1–2), "modernizing" it to deliver a "rigorous" yet "flexible and innovative" education "efficiently and effectively," but "with more time and flexibility to explore topics in depth with students." The ministry's overview of the New Curriculum (Province of British Columbia, 2018b) states unequivocally that "teachers should ensure that classroom instruction, assessment, and resources reflect sensitivity to diversity and incorporate positive role portrayals, relevant issues, and themes such as inclusion, respect, and acceptance. This includes diversity in family compositions and gender orientation" (para. 48). To facilitate this, the British Columbia School Act updates (Province of British Columbia,

2018c) set aside one non-instructional day in the calendar year to provide working teachers with professional development and support materials for SOGI education alongside three other priority topics (i.e., Indigenous education, implementation of curriculum, and student health). The stage for these systemic changes had already been set through the SOGI 1 2 3 initiative, funded by the ARC Foundation (2019), that led BC school districts to second coordinators to assist school-based Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs, anti-bullying events, provide lesson ideas and resources to working teachers, and support a range of SOGI-related initiatives for students in their school districts.

In light of these policy changes to the institutional status afforded to non-binary SOGI populations, the associate dean of teacher education, Wendy Carr, and the senior associate dean, Mary Bryson, acquired funding and seconded the Vancouver School Board's former anti-homophobia and diversity mentor, Steve Mulligan, and struck an advisory committee in order to raise awareness and support students, staff, and faculty in promoting SOGI-inclusive teacher education. The Teacher Education for All (TEFA) project lasted two years (2016–2018) and actively built bridges between the Faculty of Education and the broader SOGI community involved in local, provincial, and national education and awareness campaigns. To mobilize the community knowledge and educational expertise, TEFA organized a speaker series, in-class lectures for teacher candidates, creation of a student SOGI Alliance, professional learning workshops for education faculty and staff, and established a variety of related initiatives (such as creating an inclusion statement for use on course outlines) to increase awareness of SOGI-related issues and more broadly promote models and methods of inclusive education.

This article reports on research into SOGI inclusion in a teacher education program where the work of creating SOGI awareness was well underway in a relatively receptive environment. With the support of Dean Blye Frank and the TEFA advisory committee, Lori MacIntosh and I were given the opportunity to conduct research into the University of British Columbia's Bachelor of Education Program curriculum and were given consent to conduct interviews. This information was intended for public dissemination with faculty and staff members in a range of curriculum delivery roles around issues related to SOGI inclusion in their fields of research, curriculum development, instructional methods, and teaching or work experiences in the BEd program. We were also able to draw on three years of TEFA exit surveys to make more holistic sense of our data.

## Teaching and the Practice of Inclusive Education

Underlying the notion of inclusive education is an ideal learning environment that brings together all beings and bodies into a safe space where they are afforded equal opportunity and support as learners. For progressive education systems to achieve that ideal, individual knowledge and identity must come into play, for it is through embodied identity that learners find relevance with the contents of their educational experiences. In implementation, the general principles of inclusive education must facilitate the range of individual differences, capacities and beliefs, and different communities of practice in regard to educators, their disciplines, and the governing systemic forces of the workplace. Moreover, inclusive pedagogy requires both knowledge of relevant issues and a caring, allied, individual disposition—alongside a commitment to adopting a progressive political stance (Athanases & Larrabee, 2003). Policy alone cannot bring about effective change, as McGregor's (2008) critical analysis of BC Ministry of Education policy documents (i.e., the Safe Schools Act, a new Social Justice 12 curriculum, and a diversity guide for K–12 teachers) found, insofar as good policy intention may only "maintain practices of diversity management (Blommartet & Verschueren, 1998) rather than strategies that promote inclusive, queer-friendly/anti-oppressive education outcomes" (p. 3). Loutzenheiser (2015) similarly highlights, through "queering policy analysis" that interrogates "the production of normalcy" (p. 103), how two BC school board–level policies have "unexpected and unintended knowledge productions" (p. 99) that "manufacture a particular kind of universalized youth subject that is both problem and the body in need of a solution" (p. 100).

Inclusive education relies on the agency of teaching professionals and entire organizational cultures (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015) to participate actively in inclusive curation of contents (Waitoller & Artiles, 2016) and to create openings in the curriculum for the safe exchange of individually realized identities, for only then can we come to appreciate, and love, our differences (see Dover, Henning, & Agarwal-Rangnath, 2016). For SOGI-inclusive teacher education to manifest, there is dependency upon the individual teacher's commitment and competence. Bolstering these kinds of decision-making processes among teaching professionals enables even early career teachers to address and act upon the tensions and contradictions inherent in inclusive educational practices

(Williamson, 2017). Such decision making is fundamental to the political role that educators play (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010).

Because learners relate personally in order to embody and retain the contents of their education, learning relies on recognition of the worlds that students bring into the classroom. The notion that curriculum should be forged in collaboration with students to enhance relevance and engagement of learners in their own learning underscores the basic tenets of democratic education, and remains a site of sustained political tension between educators as transformative intellectuals and the machinations of schooling and maintaining the hegemony of the mainstream's social order (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). The work of teachers is thus liberating, supporting the agency of students to effect change and critically challenge unjust social dynamics as they manifest in their educational experience, while also instilling in students a sense of belonging (Britzman, 1995). To accomplish this task requires commitment on the part of education as a whole (Boylan & Woolsey, 2015) and progressive leadership is a crucial component of that commitment (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). As McGlashan and Fitzpatrick (2017) argue, "When sexuality is recognized as discursively constituted it is possible to see the role that schools play as social institutions" (p. 488). Camicia (2016) reminds us, "This is not to say that patriarchal gender and sexual identities don't govern the normalizing forces in the state, but it is to say that these forces interact with the resistances of progressive politics [in education] that support recognition…of LGBTQ youth and students" (p. 48).

Based on the findings presented in this article, we became aware of subtle dynamics at work in the process of implementing SOGI awareness in teacher education. We discovered how even a very small amount of formal SOGI-directed curriculum could result in surprisingly strong self-reported readiness and competence among teacher candidates to teach and talk openly about non-binary sexual orientations and gender identities. Remarkably, the effect of the TEFA project in increasing this awareness resulted in a small decrease over three years of this sense of confidence and readiness. As noted below, we see a possible explanation for this anomaly resulting from the opportunities seized by progressive teacher educators to introduce these topics informally into their instructional practices. The more this occurred, the more students were likely to envision greater complexity and personal responsibility, possibly resulting, as well, from heightened visibility of LGBTQ+ peers. Motivated and validated by the SOGI policies described above, the

resistance of teachers and teacher educators to oppressive sexual and gender norms may occur most effectively through informal conversations among teachers and their students.

## Recent Research on SOGI-Inclusive Education

In recent years, SOGI-related research literature has been precipitous, flowing across diverse fields and disciplines, with studies in areas as disparate as media literacy (McGrath, 2014; van Leent & Mills, 2018), mathematics (Rubel, 2016), health and medicine (Ton et al., 2016), social work education (Fredriksen-Goldsen, Woodford, Luke, & Gutiérrez, 2011), language arts (Bach, 2016; Staley & Leonardi, 2016) and children's literature (Schieble, 2012), archaeological teaching (Cobb & Croucher, 2016), environmental education (Russell, Sanick, & Kennelly, 2002), and gaming studies (Jensen, Taylor, de Castell, & Dilouya, 2015), to name only a few. SOGI-inclusive education goes beyond simply stating that all are welcome and then teaching disembodied knowledge of a subject in language that continuously underscores dominant, heteronormative stereotypes and the gender-binary worldview that dominates formal curricula (Steck & Perry, 2017). For example, one US study (Gorski, Davis, & Reiter, 2013) looked for SOGI-related topics in 41 multicultural teacher education course syllabi and concluded that LGBTQ+ concerns are often invisible and, based on further course instructor survey data, that the content is presented in ways that are decontextualized and mask heteronormativity.

Situated ethnographies and case studies of SOGI awareness interventions in teacher education programs or other educational settings also make up a large, and generally more optimistic, body of literature. Studies have been conducted of many gender-related topics, including gender transitioning students (Pryor, 2015; Rodela & Tobin, 2017); pre-service middle-years teachers' competencies at "hacking normativity" (Wargo, 2017); primary (Barozzi & Ojeda, 2014) and elementary teachers preparing to teach about sexual minorities (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2016); queer and allied pre-service teacher preparations prior to field placements (Benson, Smith, & Flanagan, 2014); auto-ethnographies of students enrolled in teacher education multicultural curriculum (Vavrus, 2009); LGBTQ+ teachers' perceptions of school climate (Gray, Harris, & Jones, 2016; Wright & Smith, 2015); members of queer cultural centres on campus (Teman & Lahman, 2012) and in community settings (Brockenbrough, 2016); disclosure processes of queer K–12

teachers (Bower-Phipps, 2017), of queer academics (Bennet, Hill, & Jones, 2015) and of students with disabilities managing multiple marginalized identities (Miller, 2015; Miller, Wynn, & Webb, 2018). This list barely scratches the surface. These individually detailed and storied accounts occur alongside numerous climate reports of school and university settings (e.g., Atherton et al., 2016), local and national surveys (e.g., Swanson & Gettinger, 2016), and studies by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In general, research indicates that both proper teacher training and SOGI-inclusive resources are required to ameliorate harm and harassment of student populations, as evidenced, for example, in Greytak, Kosciw, and Boesen's (2013) US national study, which shows that "LGBT-related school resources, such as GSAs, educators supportive of LGBT youth, and LGBT inclusive curricula were related to lower levels of victimization based on sexual orientation and on gender expression, and…fewer missed days of school because of safety concerns" (p. 56). However, the McCreary Centre Society report "found no relationship between LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and levels of harassment or assault" in the Canadian context (Saewyc et al., 2016, pp. 18–19), and "exposure to curricula that was inclusive of LGBTQ people or issues, particularly in sex education and health classes, was associated with decreased bullying in the school but more bullying at the individual level" (p. 18). According to the BC Confederation of Parent Teacher Committees' SOGI fact sheet (BCCPAC, 2017), "research shows that harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is experienced by approximately equal numbers of students who identify as LGBTQ and not LGBTQ" and these are "important topics that are interwoven through several curriculum areas, most notably, physical and health education, language arts, and social studies…these topics may also be discussed as they arise in the daily lives of students" (p. 2). Proper teacher training includes facilitating a growing comfort with open dialogue, of the kind that GSAs and supportive educators already engender, and without which SOGI-inclusive curriculum idles ineffectually.

A study of US-based pre-service teachers (Schmidt, Chang, Carolan-Silva, Lockhart, & Anagnostopoulos, 2012) revealed that, although aware of the importance of talking about sexual orientation and identity, "PSTs [Pre-Service Teachers] seem to need a different language and a different way of talking about and deconstructing experience" (p. 1183) to support LGB students. Magnus and Lundin's (2016) European study similarly found discontinuity between positive attitudes toward SOGI populations and lack of competencies to promote SOGI-inclusive education and challenge heteronormativity,

which Florian, Young, and Rouse (2009) addressed through the Inclusive Practice Project, while Mitton-Kükner, Kearns, and Tompkins's (2016) Canadian study found that Positive Space Training (MacDonnell & Daley, 2015) was effective in helping SOGI-aware pre-service teachers acquire those requisite discursive and pedagogical skills. However, resistance to this process is also prevalent, as the study by Robinson and Ferfolja (2010) found: "pre-service teachers often do not see equality (and social justice issues more generally) as a priority in their learning" (p. 125). A 2013 online survey conducted by the Every Teacher Project on Canadian K–12 educators' perceptions and experiences of LGBTQ+-inclusive education (Taylor et al., 2011), found that "for most teachers, it is lack of training and fear of backlash that prevents them" from teaching SOGI-related curriculum, "not, as it is often assumed, religious belief or moral conflict" (p. 155). However, Goldstein, Collins, and Halder's (2007) 18-month study of anti-homophobia school policy implementation found that if "one does not have the confidence, knowledge, or skill to answer basic questions or respond to harmful homophobic assertions, based on religious beliefs or otherwise, disrupting homophobia and heterosexism in schools may be futile" (p. 57).

How much time on SOGI-focused curriculum is needed to meet these challenges of sufficiently preparing teachers? This question is complicated by the varying lengths of programs, which, in Canada alone, vary from 11-month intensive programs following an initial degree to full five-year education degrees. Reflecting on the experiences of developing and delivering SOGI-informed lectures and activities, Kitchen and Bellini (2012) developed a successful two-hour workshop but concluded that "an inclusive education… requires more than a two-hour workshop. For teacher education to be inclusive, LGBTQ students and curriculum need to be present across all courses" (p. 458). Similarly, MacIntosh (2007) questioned the efficacy of single-class anti-homophobia lectures and workshops, and came "to recognize the dangers of this method and, more broadly, the hazards of partially integrated curricula" (p. 33). Kelly and Minnes Brandes (2010) argued that "teacher education programs often have some foundations courses or a cohort committed to 'diversity' or multiculturalism, but these are typically marginalized in the program as a whole" (p. 399). In the context of a four-year program, Kearns, Mitton-Kükner, and Tompkins (2017) "believe that nesting the LGBTQ awareness program in core mandatory courses in Year 1 contributes to the positive uptake we have by the pre-service teachers in Year 2 to attend workshops for Levels 3 and 4" (p. 7).

Curriculum-time is inherently political: the inclusion and exclusion of contents, identities, cultural points of view, and forms of expression foster territorialism that in so many ways helps to construct, inculcate, and delimit the norms and moral stigmas of mainstream society (Ratto, Grespan, & Corrêa de Lacerda, 2016).These political experiences of the curriculum, along with the language use and attitudes of the teachers delivering it, either contest or reinforce the notion of legitimate identities within mainstream society and directly affect grades and self-esteem of SOGI-marginalized populations (Dessel, Kulick, Wernick, & Sullivan, 2017). Pierre (2017) argued that "faculty members could better support their LGBTQ+ students by confronting normative discourses within their curriculum…however, to do this faculty must engage in training and educate themselves on the issues and concerns facing LGBTQ+ communities" (p. 105). This corroborates Case and Meier's (2014) study, which found that "when counselors and educators are not adequately trained to be allies to transgender students, they are not prepared to respond to their needs" (p. 64). Fleig's (2016) study revealed similar findings in principal and school leadership training programs. These studies emphasize the need to provide adequate SOGI resources and instructional support through initial teacher education and professional development programs.

## Mapping Teacher Education Curriculum for SOGI Inclusion: Methods

There are political dimensions to every curriculum map, and this study aimed to move upon the curriculum landscape with the utmost sensitivity. All maps are inherently decontextualized, reducing the complexities of actual sites to outlines. Curriculum mapping can directly address lack of context through active engagement of practicing teachers, collaboratively mapping the engaged curriculum as opposed to the designed curriculum to produce school-wide curriculum sensibility in the K–12 system (Hale, 2008; Jacobs & Johnson, 2009). However, our tertiary educational context limited the extent to which we were able to involve the wide range of instructional faculty at our institution collectively. Instead, we sought a broad range of course outlines to find instances of SOGI inclusion and begin our mapping process. Requests for course syllabi were made through the department heads or curriculum chairs, but even so, we encountered some resistance. For

instance, only three of four education departments were willing to provide access to their syllabi. Although incomplete, our dataset comprised almost 100 course outlines.

After collection, the course documents were searched for specific references to gender or sexuality regardless of how the issues were thematically incorporated. We noted a balance between inclusion of SOGI topics in course outlines and in course reading selections. These incorporations of SOGI content were likely to occur within an intersectional context involving aspects of race, class, ability, language, age, and so on, and were sometimes incorporated under umbrella terminologies such as *diversity* or *social justice* pedagogies. All instances of the following terms were recorded: gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, LGBTQ (and acronym variants), social justice, diversity, and social inclusion. Each instance was categorized according to the type of student engagement in which it appeared: course description, objectives, topics and class discussions, activities, assignments, readings, and general information (inclusion statements, etc.). Other search terms, such as intersectional, homophobia, transgender, and so on, which appeared only in the readings but not in the course outlines, were not included in the study. It is assumed that these terms may have been used in classroom discussions of the related readings, for which we did not have access.

Closer analysis of curriculum documents was undertaken on a subset of the data, which looked at all undergraduate syllabi of a single department. Taking all undergraduate courses offered by the Department of Language and Literacy Education (LLED) in the 2015–2016 academic year ($n = 49$), SOGI search terms were identified in the outlines of 14 courses (33% of total), with 15 instances noted in curriculum content and an additional 13 occurrences in course readings. Repeated references to a single term in the same content type of a document were treated as a single instance. These instances of SOGI-related terminology were distributed among the total number of LLED undergraduate course outlines with the following frequency: gender, 6%; gender identity, 6%; sexuality, 2%; LGBTQ, 2%; social justice, 8%; diversity, 16%; and social inclusion, 2% (Figure 1). Analysis of the 14 course outlines revealed that 20% of instances correlated with direct instruction as thematic lecture or discussion topics, 8% of instances were used in prompts for activities, and 72% were included as topic options for individual inquiry or written assignments (Figure 2). Specific reference to gender and sexuality occurred eight times throughout the 49 total curriculum documents, with each document outlining 39 hours of instruction and an additional reading time of approximately 1–3 hours, depending on

reading speed. Although 16.3% of total LLED course outlines included a SOGI-related term, this represents > 0.5% of total instructional focus on SOGI topics for education students in undergraduate language and literacy-based courses (Figure 3). This would vary greatly from one instructor to the next, and given that some course readings are optional, this does not reflect the actual time a student who chooses to focus their inquiry on a SOGI-related topic would spend.

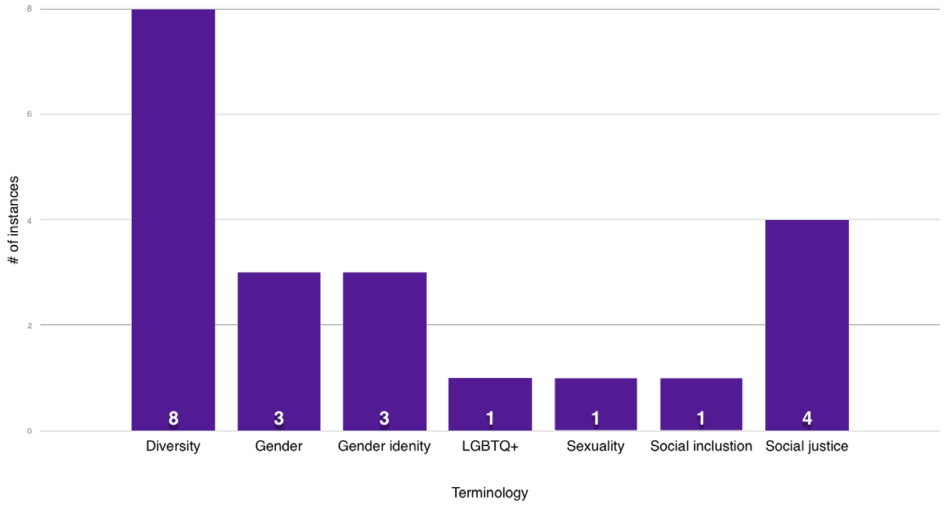


*Figure 1.* Frequency of SOGI terminology across LLED undergraduate syllabi

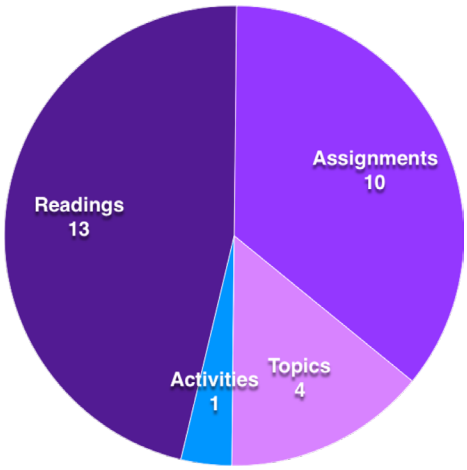


*Figure 2.* Content type where SOGI terminologies occur

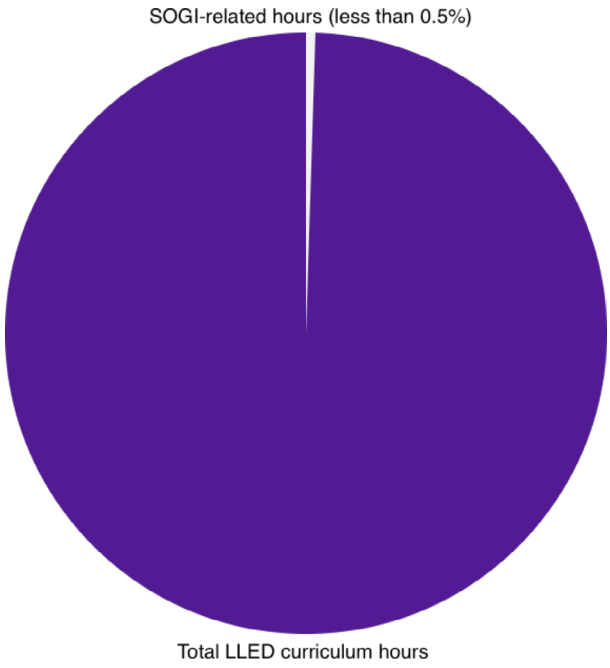


*Figure 3.* Overall percentage of time allotted to SOGI issues

## TEFA BEd Exit Survey Data

Figure 3 shows how very little (less than half of 1%) of the overall departmental undergraduate curriculum time is dedicated to SOGI-related instructional curriculum in language and literacy education. Although the generalist cross-curricular LLED courses taken by all teacher candidates show a few instances of SOGI content, from this mapping of a specialized but highly relevant field of teacher education, one might expect that students would feel unprepared to discuss and teach SOGI-related issues in their professional practice—but this was not the case. As a part of the TEFA data collection, the Teacher Education Office added the following four SOGI-related items to its annual Bachelor of Education Exit Survey data collected during 2016–2018.

Q9 – My instructors created inclusive classrooms where respectful discussions about diversity, including sexual orientation and gender identity, took place.

Q23 – I have a clearer understanding of social justice and diversity issues in education.

Q28 – I feel confident in my ability to create an inclusive and respectful environment so that all students feel safe.

Q73 – If a student came to me with questions/concerns about their sexual orientation or gender identity, I feel confident in my knowledge and ability to support that student.

The vast majority of students responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the above statements, which, on the surface, appears to contradict our curriculum mapping data. Moreover, there is a weak trend in these surveys toward an increasing number of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed on all four survey items (see Figure 4). This trend appeared despite the profound increase brought about by the TEFA project of SOGI-related information, events, and instruction, as well as the increasing presence and visibility of non-conforming gender identities and allies among the student body. One interpretation of this trend could be that, as students are becoming more informed and are making personal connections to SOGI issues, they are placing more importance on SOGI instruction and questioning their own ability to live up to the inclusive ideals these statements put forth. This does not discount many other possible factors and interpretations, or the need for more data.

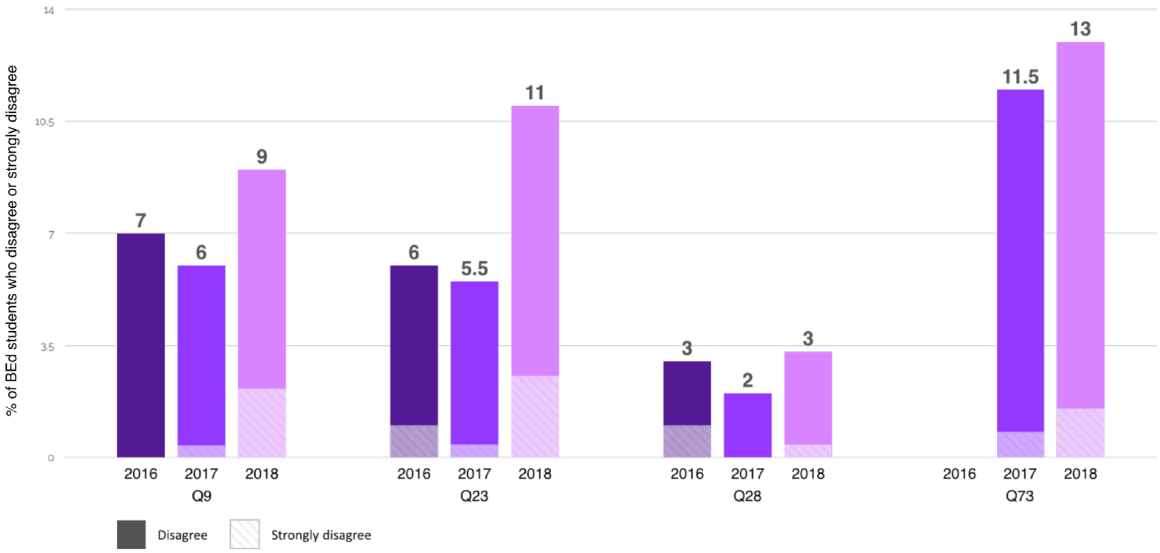


*Figure 4.* Combined percent disagreeing (solid colour) or strongly disagreeing (hatched, lighter colour) on SOGI-related exit survey items

What these overwhelmingly positive survey data prove is that curriculum mapping using course syllabi doesn't reveal very much about experiences of teacher education despite the fact that nowhere in the university does high-quality instruction matter more than in teacher education, where it sets the pedagogical precedent for generations of teaching careers that follow (Goodlad, 1994). Educational leadership in this regard is imperative in order to align the many moving parts of teacher education curriculum and pedagogy. With more of a sketch than a detailed map, we approached phase two of our curriculum mapping by contacting faculty and staff who played an influential role in the program, and began a series of interviews to gain deeper insight into SOGI inclusion in the curriculum.

## TEFA Faculty and Staff Interviews

***The interview process.*** The objective of these interviews was twofold: one, we aimed to look more deeply at how SOGI is conceptualized as relevant to theory and curriculum development and how this manifests within classroom contexts, along with the deeper question of why or why not, and two, we would mobilize this knowledge by editing the audio-recorded interviews into podcasts hosted on the TEFA project's webpage. Interviewees were made aware of and consented to both of these objectives prior to setting an interview date. In all, 20 education faculty and staff members agreed to share their knowledge, experiences, and advice. Before the interview, we introduced four general areas of discussion and proposed that we would take approximately half an hour to record their podcast. Most interviews lasted longer and, in some instances, involved a return visit. Interview questions included:

1. What is your general area of expertise, and how is SOGI conceptualized in your field?
2. How does SOGI enter into your curriculum development and planning?
3. How do you address SOGI in your teaching?
4. What kinds of reactions have you encountered and what kinds of advice would you give to teacher candidates wanting to become inclusive educators?

As a final stage in the process of our research, we took opportunities to speak with individual instructors about possible points of inclusion of SOGI-related material in their

curriculum. This did not happen in an official capacity, but in the day-to-day experience of working with colleagues on campus in the never-ending dialogue of curriculum renewal.

## Discussion of Interview Findings

Our interview questions intentionally shifted the discussion from the interviewee's scholarly frame of reference to their pedagogy, then to a more personal, practice-based stance. Aligning these frames provided insight into the gap between the formal processes of curriculum renewal versus the social practices and situated improvisations of teaching. The most consistent theme in all responses is that justice-oriented curriculum work is achieved almost exclusively within the informal, conversational spaces in classroom discourse, and these "allowable discourses" are linked to "allowable identities" (Roberts & Sarangi, 1995, p. 378; see also Nelson, 2010, p. 445). Whether speaking about elementary, middle, secondary, or tertiary education contexts, every interviewee identified these gaps; what Page (2016) calls *cracks* in formal curriculum, as points of accessing an often unspoken but lived curriculum that goes on in and out of schools.

Teachable moments when dialogue shifts from the prescribed curriculum to identity-inclusive sharing, which Shawna Faber (2019) described as "going off-script" (01:20) and Derek Gladwin (2019) calls "spaces where we can jump in and start to discuss… SOGI issues (01:26)," foster personal connection both to subject matter and subjectivities in the classroom. Through the gaps in structured curriculum, classrooms can breathe with lungs of open dialogue: time is afforded to identity and to forming relational bonds. These "spaces allow kids to be who they are (01:45)" as Lori MacIntosh (2019) states, and the art of teaching is to utilize these spaces and pauses to learn and share equally in the process of becoming SOGI aware. According to Lisa Loutzenheiser (2019), it is the teacher's professional responsibility "to actually start talking to students, whether they are six or sixteen, so that they are the ones who can guide us" (02:06) to places where they are recognized and supported, and this is only possible when "we offer them the opportunities to have the conversations—the difficult, scary, uncomfortable conversations around sexual orientation and gender identity" (02:26). By allowing this slippage in on-script time, teachers and students have the ability to create an inclusive environment. It doesn't

happen without these conversations, because it must arise from the immediate subjectivities within any given learning environment.

Annette Henry (2019) tells us that to be an effective teacher and support social justice initiatives, you first have "to believe in what you are doing… If we believe in equity, and we really believe in justice, at some point we have to say, 'this is what I believe and this is what I'm going to teach,' because at some level, teaching is very political" (02:48). Only through experience can teacher candidates begin to clearly imagine their own inclusive classroom space, and modelling inclusive conversation in these gaps in formal classroom discourse happens when it becomes part of "the regular discourse of a course," Wendy Carr tells us (2019, 03:24). Such conversations are fundamental, therefore, to all inclusive educational strategies, and this notion, for Steve Mulligan (2019), is ingrained in the careful use of terminologies, such as SOGI—a term he likes "because everyone has a sexual orientation and everyone has a gender identity, and so it is intended to be inclusive. It doesn't define a group of people, rather, it is a conversation" (03:55) How we have this conversation depends on the flexibility of teachers to move through uncharted gaps in the daily planned curriculum, and their confidence with, even love of, accepting others for who they are becoming, rather than how society discursively positions them. When failing to be intentionally inclusive in these moments, educators instead perpetuate the hidden curriculum of shame and blame.

From the student perspective, formal classroom discourses are contested and challenged upon the locus of their personal identity. This locus plays out continuously even though their courses, teachers, and locations change. SOGI-inclusive education therefore cannot be compartmentalized within formal curriculum because, as Carr (2019) states, "we're not looking at people in little boxes" (04:49); instead, the ability to create inclusive spaces becomes a basic competency on the part of teaching professionals. As MacIntosh (2019) argues, "it's about giving [teacher candidates] the awareness and the skill set to check their assumptions at the door and create and recognize when they're not creating those spaces, or recognizing when the schools are not…[creating] spaces that allow kids to be who they are" (05:01).

## The Role of Language

Another common theme in the interviewee's statements was the central role of language and how people communicate in these informal conversational spaces in the curriculum, which can critically enhance inclusivity or perpetuate fear, blame, exclusion, and stereotypes. These are larger social processes that "we all have a part in sustaining or interrupting," as Mona Gleason (2019, 05:39) suggests, "let's look at this as a set of processes and relationships that shift and change over time…how are we going to talk about these things" (05:31)? Loutzenheiser (2019) similarly takes up this inquiry "to really, really engage with what it is to have these conversations above and beyond Queer 101 or Trans 101, how do we actually talk about what does it mean" (05:48)? Furthermore, "teachers are professionals…they're the ones who should be guiding these conversations because they're the professionals in the classroom" (Loutzenheiser, 2019, 05:59). This is a language-based skill, acquired through practice. As MacIntosh (2019) elaborated, "if you do something enough, it becomes a part of the way you think. So, if you start, from the very beginning to include [SOGI] in your pedagogy, it becomes your pedagogical style. It becomes part of who you are as a teacher" (06:20). Leslie Roman (2019) shares that "in the end, it comes down to teachers educating themselves and allowing youth with their different differences to help teachers become educated. And so sometimes, the best education a teacher gets, is a student walking up to them and saying 'I don't identify as a boy or a girl'" (06:46). Marianne McTavish (2019) reminds us, "part of that is teachers being aware and changing our language too"; early childhood and elementary "teachers, typically, when they address their children, call them 'boys and girls.' So, boys line up, girls line up, or pattern boy, girl, boy, girl, and they don't even realize they're doing that (07:27)." What is important is awareness that "maybe there are children in there who are exploring gender and identity and there's no place for them there, so they have to choose between one or the other" (McTavish, 2019, 07:49): the binary bind.

Ingrained language use makes creating safe educational spaces for gender non-binary youth more difficult. Fear on the part of teachers about making verbal mistakes becomes a deterrent to having SOGI-related conversations. Carr reminds us, "you are going to make mistakes—you just are" (2019, 08:31). Changing linguistic tendencies requires attention and effort, which in turn requires personal motivation, but, Metcalfe (2019) argues, "we are the human part of teacher education, and don't we want to

be better humans" (08:39)? To develop positive relations, we need to address "how we communicate that kind of navigational language in the higher education environment…I think of everything I do in that space as modelling, to some extent, what we are and how we are in higher education" (Metcalfe, 2019, 08:48). Kerry Renwick (2019) argues that SOGI education goes beyond "saying 'what do you want, what do you prefer'" to using "alternatives between he and she" (2019, 09:17). Gladwin (2019) agrees with the use of "an inclusion statement on the syllabus…just bringing it into awareness and saying please approach me about whatever name or pronoun you want me to use" (09:36). Metcalfe (2019) echoed this general incentive to start the conversation, saying, "I think what I would do differently is I would be more explicit about pronouns, you know, how we identify ourselves in our everyday interactions with each other—have that be part of the introduction of the class…infuse it through all the layers of the class" (10:00). Carr (2019) elaborates that "it's the everyday language that we use, it's the everyday examples that we draw on, it's the readings we refer to and how…we make SOGI just a routine part of how we are and who we are" (10:19). Leslie Roman (2019) drew upon this same individual transformation as the dependent factor in the success of SOGI-inclusive education: "In the end it comes down to teachers educating themselves…every movement needs pride. Every identity needs pride. I think of this as, how do we teach students in our class who are discovering their non-conforming gender identities, that they can find pride in the classroom" (2019, 10:46)?

Often, interviewees reflected on their own need to self-educate as scholars and teacher educators. "I have to work on my language," Sandra Scott (2019) states openly, "because, brought up in the very Western, British system, as we call it, there's always a male and female, he/she, and trying to remove that from my vocabulary and focus on non-gendered words is really difficult, particularly in science" (11:11). In this reverse of the typical flows of knowledge and intellectual guidance, Scott continues "our students are so with it. They get it. They're young, they're inclusive…they choose to become teachers so I think many of them already have a very inclusive mind. I learn from them how to be inclusive myself" (11:42). This reversal of knowledge flow is also apparent in other comments. Renwick (2019) says "it's a matter of trying to appreciate and learn from students" (12:13), while Mulligan (2019) points out that "sometimes the catalyst for learning a bit more [about SOGI] might come from our pre-service teachers" (12:34). But much of this work also depends on supports within the environment, the kind that TEFA

was created to provide. Mulligan (2019) noted that faculty are appreciative of that support, "because it has expanded their notion of sexuality and gender and how these need to be integrated into what they're doing with teacher candidates" (12:57). Questions remain, however, regarding how to teach teachers to enhance the informal aspects of curriculum with a SOGI justice-oriented perspective, now that policy stipulates the importance of doing so.

As mentioned earlier, professional day(s) in BC have been committed to providing the kinds of support for these professional learning processes that bear resemblance to the approach that TEFA has taken in the university setting. Teacher Education connects individual students with professional teachers, school advisors, staff, and university faculty, and changes in policy need to be reflected across these professional groupings. Rod Brown (2019), a practicum coordinator, notes that "a large number of our school advisors come to [work in teacher education], not because they want to be the mentor but because they want to be the mentee…they are the ones wanting to get new ideas in terms of how to shape their teaching whether that's the [BC] New Curriculum or new stances like SOGI" (13:48). Making SOGI central to teacher education prioritizes creating space not only in the classrooms, but in all the many settings where teacher educators gather to share ideas, pedagogical strategies and information. Brown (2019) adds that now, with the institutional support of TEFA, "we're having the conversation" (14:28).

Loutzenheiser (2019) asks, "How do we help people think through and understand the systemic and the critical so that they have the opportunity to think about issues like power and privilege in substantive ways that ask them to actually look both at themselves, to look interiorly, but also exteriorly at the system that encourages them to function in particular ways" (14:34)? Answering this can only be done on an individual basis, as there is no overarching solution to oppression. Henry (2019) says, "I work hard at creating a climate where people feel comfortable and also feel empowered to say this is one of the most important jobs—ever" (15:14)! We need to understand the workings of oppression so that we can end oppression in all its forms, to which Henry adds, "I want them to understand a whole matrix of oppression" because the job of teaching is about "empowering [all] kids" (15:37). Gladwin (2019) reminded us that understanding at this level of abstraction requires an understanding of gender as "a social construct and it's a way in which we identify…there's no 'natural'…so how we deconstruct that social construct of nature and naturalness" (15:36) becomes his main point of concern if teacher

educators are bringing about "SOGI awareness in their classes. These are obviously important issues in society and we need to find space to give them a platform in an equitable society" (16:00). The process of renewing our commitment to inclusive language and discourses percolates through informal gaps across the curriculum.

## SOGI Across the Curriculum

Gladwin (2019) speaks to the ways that critical interpretation and SOGI awareness can be integrated throughout the study of literature, democracy, and environment, and Scott (2019) maintains that in the natural sciences there are many opportunities to engage in gender-related discussions that are vital to the science curriculum. Faber (2019) teaches teachers how to "be an anthropologist in their own practice and their own worlds, and to take a step back and look at what things are happening…that we just think are normal and why" (16:56). Renwick (2019) sees home economics as playing a central role in creating "a safer space for LGBTQ youth in the sense that you can create a food or a textiles hub that doesn't necessarily play with binary versions of gender" (17:12). Metcalfe (2019) summarizes her position that "it's not a unit you add on, it's not a *make sure to put this before or after the practicum* kind of question…we just do it, through it" (17:35). John Yamamoto (2019) tells pre-service teachers that "one of the greatest things about being a teacher is you have that autonomy to push the envelope" (17:54). Renwick's approach in the teacher education context is to "push the boundaries and their comfort" while providing "a framework for their professional practice so that they've actually got a way to talk back to, and to think about, what they're doing within their own classrooms" (2019, 18:03). McTavish (2019) observed that, "We always tell our students to take more of a critical stance…and so, every time something comes up, it's just making the children more aware and more critical of what is there, and what media does. I think that can come at a pretty early age" (18:25). Forging these relation-building competencies is fundamental to teachers at every level, and in every discipline: as Metcalfe (2019) asks, "[Aren't] concepts of identity, concepts of who we are as humans, part of every teachable subject" (18:56)?

If this is to become a general practice in all classroom discourses, then it is fundamental to teach "that gender is on a spectrum" (19:15), argues Roman (2019): "I think of SOGI as having, like other social justice efforts, the ability to luminesce when well

integrated into every subject" (19:21). Changes in legislation, policy, and curriculum provide the much needed institutional provocations and professional motivations needed to do this work across the curriculum. These changes give the rationale to "break down some of those resistances" (19:35) as Renwick (2019) states, for ourselves and others to become learning allies for all. Opening curriculum to productive and inclusive conversations is not only an act of belief, but one, Roman (2019) reminds us, that is ultimately about love: "There's a side we don't talk about much, and it's called the politics of social justice as love. If you can create SOGI as the possibility of pride and living without fear, you have created an artistic masterpiece in your class" (19:54). For to teach inclusively is to be loving, and there is no curriculum for love.

## Implications and Limitations of This Study for Teacher Education

Curriculum mapping of a departmental cross-section of undergraduate teacher education course syllabi did not reveal what was actually taking place as far as self-reported SOGI awareness of students in the Bachelor of Education program. For that information, we needed to turn to exit surveys, which indicated a large majority of students felt that they had been given adequate preparation on matters pertaining to SOGI education. To confirm indications that a very small amount of formal curriculum had been effective in developing the awareness and confidence of a very large number of teacher education students, we interviewed individual faculty and staff. Aligning three limited viewpoints on SOGI-related curriculum in a BEd program revealed a bigger picture: SOGI awareness in teacher education occurs informally, when the discourse shifts from the language of curriculum to matters of personal relevance—when the scheduled class discussion becomes an open conversation, when lecture topic becomes relational talk. Our data suggest that these dialogical openings are critical to learning processes and make up an essential part of progressive work in teacher education.

This study of SOGI-inclusive curriculum occurs in the conducive context of a teacher education program where conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity had already begun among progressive educators situated in a university town. There is no doubt that this study reflects, as well, the impact and visibility of the Teacher

Education for All project, which was instrumental in mobilizing knowledge and consolidating efforts to make SOGI awareness a high priority for the UBC Faculty of Education. Mulligan (2019) observes "an increase this year [2018] in the number of trans-identified teacher candidates who have come into the program and some of them have specifically said that they felt that their gender identity prevented them from becoming a teacher, but when they heard about the TEFA Project, they felt more comfortable and they felt that maybe they could actually pursue a career in teaching" (21:22). TEFA has since evolved into a broader-mandated SOGI UBC advisory committee, which continues the advancement of SOGI-inclusive education in the teacher education program, and works across faculties, universities, and other institutions. Change toward a more just society requires situated, hopeful efforts and moments of meaningful conversation as much as it requires the legislative motions of national assemblies. Indeed, if this study has anything to say, it requires them more.

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