



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

BALANSAKTER

- KROPPAR, SEXUALITETER OCH DET OVÄNTADE

Kritiska och didaktiska perspektiv på sexualundervisning inom biologiämnet

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Balancing acts – bodies, sexualities, and the unexpected: Critical and educational perspectives on sex education within biology

Abstract

Sexuality education (SE) involves topics that can be perceived as sensitive and private, which creates challenges for teachers. Teachers in Sweden feel uncomfortable with the subject of SE, as they lack knowledge about LGBTQ issues and experience uncertainty in handling charged discussions. Therefore, teachers need tools for teaching this subject, regarding both the content itself and the teaching methods. Aiming to facilitate inclusive SE, this thesis thus contributes to the knowledge of contemporary SE in Sweden. Two studies were conducted: the first addressing Swedish Biology textbooks in grades 7-9, and the second involving classroom observations in three different teachers' SE teaching in grade 8. These studies were developed into four papers. Paper 1 presents a content analysis of five Swedish Biology textbooks using feminist, crip and queer perspectives. The results show that trans persons, homosexuality, bisexuality, and heterosexuality are standard content. Representations of disabilities are sparse, while intersex and asexuality are not included. In paper 2, Swedish whiteness is analysed in the textbooks and teacher interviews through the lens of critical race theory. The findings reveal that references to legislation, science, progression, ethnicity, tradition, and culture construct Swedish whiteness as a 'happy' place 'here', in contrast to less happy places elsewhere, far away 'there'. Paper 3 concerns different tensions that arise during classroom teaching and how teachers balance these situations. Both the anti-oppressive strategies and the teaching methods focused on processes, facts, and relations are analysed. The results show that teachers can use tensions in SE to challenge prejudice and heteronormative assumptions. Also, teachers' inclusion of students' thoughts and worlds, even around controversial topics, creates recognition, subjectification, and meaning making for the students. Paper 4 explores how teachers handle unexpected situations in SE classrooms. The short interruptions are analysed through the theoretical concepts becomings, intensity, and glow. According to the results, when teachers capture unexpected comments, student engagement is aroused, allowing new concepts to enrich the SE content. In sum, this thesis concludes that SE needs to embrace more diverse content. This could be achieved through fluid conceptions of bodies and sexualities, thus facilitating students' recognition and subjectification, especially through the inclusion of nuances of asexuality, alternative family constellations, intersex, and crip. Finally, teachers need to welcome tensions and the unexpected as rich possibilities to capture new SE content and to create student engagement.

Keywords

Sexuality education, Biology textbooks, classroom, crip, queer, Swedish whiteness, LGBTQAI, the unexpected

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