

No Outsiders: Researching Approaches to Sexualities Equality in Primary Schools

Name of organisation:
University of Sunderland

DESCRIPTION

Rather than a top-down approach, the practice employs practice-based approaches to research and professional development. In keeping with the Participatory Action Research model, research evidence is developed immediately into new or revised practice and disseminated to the academic and professional communities.

With the consultation and support of the rest of the team, teacher-researchers design their research based on their particular strengths and interests as well as what they perceive to be local needs and resources. Data in the form of field notes, reflective journal entries, artefacts (including lesson plans and samples of pupil work), web-based discussions and summaries and transcripts of interviews and meetings are uploaded to the password-protected team web site. Some of the analysis takes place on the web-based discussion forum, also private and password protected, which also serves as a medium of communication across team members. This data, including web-based discussions, is available for any team member to further analyse and disseminate with the approval of the teacher who generated it.

Within the broad framework, teachers-researcher projects have included: 1) writing and revising policy; 2) designing and piloting curricula/lesson plans across schools (for example literacy, music, art, theatre projects); 3) investigating staff and parent attitudes toward LGBT inclusion; 4) whole school activities such as diversity celebrations and assemblies; 5) evaluating specific classroom resources, including books and videos. Much of the analysis has been done in the small moments of questioning and challenging everyday assumptions about sexuality and gender; in many ways the work of the project rests in the brief comments, responses and in-flight decisions that teachers make each day.

In order to carry out their action research projects, teachers in the participating schools were provided with training provided by a Diversity Trainer, who helped to provide school staff with:

- a) an understanding of how sexual equalities fit into a broader equality agenda
- b) an overview of how national policy and teaching guidance support this work
- c) an opportunity to explore their own attitudes toward and assumptions about LGBT people.

Similar preparation, adapted to the national context and emphasizing European level support and guidance, would be essential.