

**Resistance to sexuality education. Abstract. NERAconference Malmö 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> of March 2024**

As has been pointed out repeatedly in research literature, teaching about sexuality causes embarrassment and general discomfort among both teachers and students. My research project (funded by Independent Research Fund Denmark 2023) proposes that the subject matter itself causes resistance, with sexuality being inherently transgressive. Hence, its controversial status in both research and teaching. Teaching lessons on sexuality risks jeopardizing teachers' professional identity by challenging societal and professional norms that the student-teacher relationship should be desexualized. I argue that acknowledging this is key to improving sexuality education.

Sexuality cannot be delimited to a set of practices and distinct situations; the question of what is sexual is blurred in practice and in speech. Sex implicates the speaking subject as subject to sexual drives (Freud) and as a subject of desire (Lacan).

Therefore, the aim of the project is to offer insight into why, when, and how sexuality education causes resistance among teachers.

This paper is distinguished by its psychoanalytic approach. For decades, psychoanalysis has enjoyed marginal status in academia (symptomatically, C. Millot's groundbreaking *Freud antipédagogue* (1983) has not been translated into English) and the potential of this approach has remained largely unexploited. The paper asserts that the reasons for this marginalized status are the same as those for resisting sexuality education. In classic Freudian psychoanalysis, sexuality and resistance to it in various forms are seen as the key to understanding the formation of the subject. While dominant psychoanalytic traditions in the English-speaking world have placed less focus on sexuality and drive, these concepts have remained at the core of theory and analysis rooted in French Lacanian psychoanalysis.

The approach of this project aims to show how sexuality education places wider-reaching pedagogical challenges in the spotlight and challenges teachers' professionalism. In other words, sexuality represents a paradigmatic example of what I have designated a "pedagogical impossibility" and a "negativity" in pedagogical practices (Hyldgaard, 2010, 2022).

The project will conduct a qualitative study of how embarrassment is experienced by teachers when teaching sexuality education. To access a range of experiences, interviews will be conducted with a sample of 15-20 teachers, the majority of whom has not specialized in the field. By conducting interviews with teachers the project seeks to produce insight into why and how sexuality education causes resistance among teachers.

Concerning the relevance to Nordic educational research Roien, Graugaard & Simovska (2022, p. 70) have stated: "Despite fifty years of compulsory sexuality education in public schools in Denmark, the policies and practices relating to sexuality education have received surprisingly limited attention in research, and, consequently, remain largely unexplored".

#### References:

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