

**Reticence (“blufærdighed”) in sexuality education. Løgstrup’s phenomenological approach. 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. The paper aims to offer insight into why, when, and how sexuality education causes resistance among teachers. Why this effect of embarrassment and reticence (“blufærdighed”)? What is reticence?

The Danish philosopher and theologian Løgstrup’s phenomenological descriptions of “reticence” (in *Kunst og etik*, 2020, Forlaget Klim) can be of service. Is reticence an obstacle that needs to be overcome in order to teach sexuality? Is lack of reticence an ideal? Should it be described and understood as a question of individual psychological inhibitions or even as a trait of character called bigotry? Should it rather be described sociologically as a question of the teacher’s formal, professional position in relations to pupils? Or, rather, can it be described phenomenologically as the subject’s defense against exposure of sexual difference and sexual orientation?

This paper aims to show the congeniality between a psychoanalytic approach and a phenomenological approach in order to discuss whether reticence is unavoidable as far as sexuality education is concerned and in order 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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