

Greek Preservice Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Gender and Sexual Diversity and Sexuality Education

VANA CHIOU*¹ AND MARIA SIDERI²

☞ This study explores preservice teachers' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding gender and sexual diversity and sexuality education. Preservice teachers from universities in Greece were invited to participate in an online survey within the framework of the project "All Inclusive! Building LGBT+ friendly schools across Europe". A total of 123 preservice teachers completed a structured questionnaire investigating their knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding gender and sexual diversity and sexuality education in schools. The findings demonstrate that the majority of the participants endorse the idea of equality between heterosexual, homosexual and transgender people and have positive perceptions of their university setting's inclusivity. The results also indicate that although the surveyed preservice teachers received limited education on sexuality-related issues when they themselves were at school, they acknowledge the importance of providing sexuality education in schools today. The findings highlight the lack of preparedness of preservice teachers to support students on sexual diversity issues due to the limited teaching knowledge acquired during their initial teacher education. The study has several implications for initial teacher education in Greece with respect to sexuality education.

Keywords: initial teacher education, LGBT+, preservice teachers, sexual diversity, gender diversity, sexuality education

1 *Corresponding Author. University of the Aegean, Department of Geography, Mytilene, Greece; b.xiou@aegean.gr.

2 University of the Aegean, Department of Cultural Technology and Communication, Mytilene, Greece.

Znanje, stališča in zaznave bodočih grških učiteljev glede spolne in seksualne raznolikosti ter spolne vzgoje

VANA CHIOU IN MARIA SIDERI

≈ Ta študija raziskuje znanje, stališča in zaznave bodočih učiteljev glede spolne in seksualne raznolikosti ter spolne vzgoje. Bodoči učitelji z grških univerz so bili povabljeni k sodelovanju v spletni anketi v okviru projekta »All Inclusive! Gradimo do LGBT+ prijazne šole po Evropi«. Skupno je sodelovalo 123 bodočih učiteljev, tako da so izpolnili strukturiran vprašalnik, ki je preučeval njihovo znanje, stališča in zaznave glede spolne in seksualne raznolikosti ter spolne vzgoje v šolah. Ugotovitve kažejo, da večina udeležencev podpira idejo enakopravnosti med heteroseksualnimi, homoseksualnimi in transspolnimi osebami ter ima pozitivne zaznave o stopnji inkluzivnosti v svojem univerzitetnem okolju. Izsledki prav tako kažejo, da anketirani bodoči učitelji priznavajo pomen zagotavljanja spolne vzgoje v današnjih šolah, čeprav so med lastnim šolanjem sami prejeli omejeno izobraževanje o vprašanih, povezanih s spolnostjo. Ugotovitve poudarjajo pomanjkanje pripravljenosti bodočih učiteljev za podporo učencem pri vprašanih seksualne raznolikosti zaradi omejenega pedagoškega znanja, pridobljenega med njihovim začetnim izobraževanjem za učitelje. Študija ima več implikacij za začetno izobraževanje učiteljev v Grčiji, kar se tiče povezave s spolno vzgojo.

Ključne besede: začetno izobraževanje učiteljev, LGBT+, bodoči učitelji, seksualna raznolikost, spolna raznolikost, spolna vzgoja

Introduction

Sexuality education is an important means of promoting sexual health (Braeken & Cardinal, 2008) and it is important to ensure that students receive the information they need in order to make healthy, respectful and informed choices regarding sexuality-related issues (European Expert Group on Sexuality Education, 2015; Parker et al., 2009). Sweden was the first country in Europe to introduce sexuality education into the school curriculum. It did so in 1955 and was followed by other European countries (European Expert Group on Sexuality Education, 2015). However, despite notable educational reforms with respect to sexuality education, “important barriers continue to hinder the uptake and effective implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) programs” (Geunis, 2019, p. 107).

Within this framework, teachers play a key role in shaping how issues of gender and sexual diversity are addressed in schools. The present study focuses on the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of preservice teachers in Greece with respect to sexual diversity and education. It aims to explore the diverse factors that may influence their preparedness to teach issues related to sexual diversity.

In Greece, the first official statement about sexuality education was made in 1964 and it was not until nearly 30 years later that sexuality education was incorporated in school health education programmes, first in the 1995 educational reforms (Gerouki, 2011) and then later in 2003. The delay can be attributed to various factors, including the political situation during the Greek dictatorship from 1967 to 1974, as well as the strong links between the state and the Greek Orthodox Church, known for its conservative ideas regarding sexual diversity (Karagiannis, 2009) as well as its influence on people’s views and attitudes (Papadaki et al., 2013). In addition, LBGT+ activism became more visible relatively late, in the early twenty-first century. Protests against homophobia have contributed to legal advances over the past 15 years, including workplace protection regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, the right of same-sex couples to cohabit and marry, and allowing transgender individuals to have their gender identity legally recognised without medical or surgical intervention.

When first introduced, sexuality education was part of a non-compulsory interdisciplinary curriculum that included an axis on sexuality education–gender relationships. However, topics related to sexuality education were also included into primary education textbooks in environmental studies and science, with a focus on body awareness, body care and health, and the

reproduction system. In secondary education textbooks, topics related to sexuality education were found primarily in biology and home economics curricula, and focused mainly on human reproduction, health (diseases, illnesses and prevention), adolescence, gender relationships, family life and family planning. For many years, however, sexuality education remained seriously limited in its focus, concentrating on the biological aspect of sexuality and failing to address issues such as gender and sexual diversity, and LGBT+ inclusion in the school community and in society in general (Chiou & Sideri, 2022). More recently, important changes have taken place.

In 2016, the national Ministry of Education introduced a Body and Identity thematic week in all lower secondary schools, covering bodily changes during adolescence, sex and gender, gender stereotypes, and human and women's rights. In 2020, sexuality education became part of the compulsory national curriculum through skills workshops across all educational levels. According to the Greek Institute of Educational Policy (<https://iep.edu.gr/en/>), these activities aim to develop knowledge, critical thinking and life skills, as well as respect for gender, rights, health, safety and equality (Chiou & Sideri, 2022).

Since the incorporation of sexuality education into national compulsory curricula, various Greek educational institutions and teacher training organisations have initiated teacher training in sexuality education, aimed at raising preservice and in-service teachers' awareness of key issues and enhancing their teaching skills in this subject area (Chiou & Sideri, 2022). Similar educational initiatives supporting sexuality education and promoting inclusion in schools can be found elsewhere in Europe (Coulter et al., 2021; Huertas-Abril & Palacios-Hidalgo, 2022). However, important barriers hinder the promotion of sexuality education in schools, including the absence of inclusive approaches to teaching sexuality and LGBT+ issues (Bartulović & Kušević, 2024; Rónay et al., 2022), and parents' perceptions on gender and sexual diversity issues (Bartulović & Kušević, 2024; Chiou & Sideri, 2025; Rónay et al., 2022).

The Greek context therefore underscores the importance of examining preservice teachers' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual diversity in relation to their preparedness to implement sexuality education.

Preservice Teachers, Initial Teacher Education and Sexuality Education

International research in the field of initial teacher education suggests that preservice teachers, regardless of their sexual orientation, do not feel sufficiently prepared to support sexuality education in schools in the future. Those who self-identify as LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, plus

other identities or expressions of sexualities not covered by these terms) often feel unsafe in the heteronormative study environment, where there is denial of differences and diversity beyond heterosexuality due to their sexual identity (Lee & Carpenter, 2014).

In the USA, cisgender preservice teachers were found to need support in teaching students who self-identify as transgender or express their gender in diverse ways. They also need careful preparation and support in considering issues related to gender identity, sexuality and the systemic nature of gender oppression as part of their work in schools (Blair & Deckman, 2019, 2020). Similarly, early childhood preservice teachers in Greece have stressed the need for theoretical and practical training during initial teacher education regarding gender and sexuality education issues (Brouskeli & Sapountzis, 2017).

Preservice teachers need knowledge and awareness of sex, gender and sexual diversity to support their teaching on related issues. Lack of such knowledge, or limited knowledge, is likely to affect their teacher self-efficacy in sexuality education in the future (Swackhamer et al., 2009), as content knowledge and self-efficacy have been found to be highly correlated among preservice teachers (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013).

Given that preservice teachers' prior knowledge influences their understanding of issues related to sexual diversity and their willingness to modify pedagogical approaches (Cutler et al., 2021), it is important to enhance preservice teachers' awareness of sexual diversity and promote their reflection on LGBTQ+ issues in order to further promote inclusion and support sexual diversity in schools (Huertas-Abril & Palacios-Hidalgo, 2022).

Previous studies highlight knowledge and attitudes regarding sexual diversity as core elements of preservice teachers' preparedness to promote and support sexuality education. In order to support preservice teachers' education on sexual diversity, Blair and Deckman (2019) suggest that they should be provided with opportunities to explore related topics from both a systemic and an individual perspective. Coulter et al. (2020) have documented how service-based learning can have a positive impact on preservice teachers' ability to serve LGBTQ+ students in education. The inclusion of subject matter and approaches related to teaching about sex, gender and sexual diversity in initial teacher education curricula can enhance teachers' abilities to support students who self-identify as LGBTQ+ and challenge the heteronormativity that is present in many schools (Dunkerly et al., 2022). Such an approach promotes inclusion in classrooms in which gender and sexual diversity can be celebrated and helps prevent the exclusion of students who may self-identify as gender or sexual diverse (Neto, 2018; Staley, 2022).

Research Questions

The present study was conducted within the Erasmus+ Project “All Inc! Building LGBT+ friendly schools across Europe” (2020–2023), which involved partners from Belgium, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. The project aimed to promote gender and sexuality inclusive education and create school environments that would allow all students to prosper regardless of their sexual orientation or sexual identity (Holz & Geunis, 2021).

The aim of the present study was to investigate preservice teachers' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual diversity and sexuality education during their initial teacher education. In the study, LGBT+ is used as an umbrella term for sexual and gender diversity. However, the empirical focus was limited to preservice teachers' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding homosexuality and transgender people.

As the study was exploratory, research questions were posed rather than hypotheses:

1. What are preservice teachers' perceived knowledge of and attitudes towards sexuality and relationships?
2. What is preservice teachers' knowledge of homosexuality?
3. What are preservice teachers' attitudes towards homosexuality and transgender people?
4. What are preservice teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards sexual diversity in the university setting?
5. What are preservice teachers' attitudes towards sexuality education in school?
6. What are preservice teachers' perceived knowledge of and attitudes towards teaching sexuality-related issues?

Method

Participants

A total of 134 preservice teachers participated in the study. Of them, 11 filled out less than half of the questionnaire and were consequently excluded from the sample. The included preservice teachers were undergraduate students aged 18–24 years and enrolled in pedagogical courses. Of the 123 participants, 20 identified as men, 100 as women and 2 as “other”, while 1 stated “prefer not to answer”. Regarding their sexual orientation, 80.5% of the participants identified as heterosexual, 4.9% as homosexual, 7.3% as bisexual and 4.1% “preferred not to answer”, while 3.3% stated “don't know yet”. More men than women identified

as homosexual, while more women than men identified as bisexual, were uncertain about their orientation or chose not to answer.

Instruments

For research purposes, a questionnaire was devised consisting of statements to which participants could respond using a 6-point Likert scale, as well as five trichotomous questions and one multiple-choice question with a single correct answer. The questionnaire was based on instruments used in previous studies conducted in 2012–2013 within the Comenius project EDGE: EDUcation & GEndEr (De Witte & Holz, 2013) and in 2016–2017 within the Erasmus project Homo’poly (De Witte et al., 2018; De Witte et al., 2019), thus allowing some longitudinal comparison. In order to ensure comparability of data, some questions remained unchanged, even though they appear somewhat outdated today (Geunis et al., 2022). The development of the questionnaire was based on theoretical frameworks and prior research results.

The questionnaire in its original form was prepared in English in order to serve the wider All Inc! Erasmus project. After pre-validation, it was translated into Greek employing a forward–backward translation process. The rationale behind the choice of a 6-point Likert scale was to avoid inadvertently encouraging respondents to adopt neutral positions and to ensure a more evaluative stance towards the topics investigated. Internal reliability was found to be very satisfactory ($\alpha = .884$).

A series of closed-ended questions assessed the preservice teachers’ knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual diversity and education. The first section of the questionnaire included demographic questions. The second section consisted of six items regarding the preservice teachers’ perceived knowledge and attitudes related to sexuality and relationships. The third section, consisting of six items, explored the preservice teachers’ knowledge of homosexuality, as this topic is more explicitly addressed in the secondary education curricula of partner countries. The fourth section, which included fifteen items, explored the preservice teachers’ attitudes towards and perceived social acceptance of homosexuality, while the fifth section, which consisted of five items, investigated their attitudes towards transgender people. Knowledge questions about transgender were omitted, as related topics are not addressed in the curricula of the project’s partner countries, nor do they appear in Greek curricula. The sixth section of the questionnaire included three items about perceptions of and attitudes towards sexual diversity in the university setting, while the seventh section, consisting of eight items, explored the preservice teachers’ perceived knowledge of LGBT+ issues and attitudes towards teaching

sexuality-related issues. Finally, two open-ended questions were used to explore useful resources for creating LGBT+ friendly schools and to elicit any additional comments.

Research Design

The preservice teachers were recruited from various Greek universities with departments related to teacher education. The universities were asked to invite students from different subject specialisations who are interested in becoming secondary education teachers to participate anonymously in an online survey.

Approval was granted by the School of Business and Economics, Maastricht University, Ethical Review Committee Inner City faculties (ERICIC_367_15_06_2022). The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and given assurances regarding confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was strictly voluntary.

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS 21. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the demographic data and the responses to the seven questionnaire sections. As the study was exploratory and involved small, uneven subgroups, particularly those related to gender identity and sexual orientation, analysis was limited to descriptive statistics in order to present a reliable picture of the preservice teachers' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual diversity and sexuality education, while avoiding inferential or multivariate analysis, which would potentially produce statistically unreliable comparisons.

The responses to the open-ended questions were analysed using content analysis (Bengtsson, 2016). The authors familiarised themselves with the data by reading and rereading the responses before generating an initial set of codes for analysis, which were then systematically organised into broader thematic categories.

Results

Only 21.2% of the surveyed preservice teachers (cumulative percentage of "slightly agree", "agree" and "totally agree") stated they had received reliable knowledge about sex and relationships during their secondary education, while 57.7% disagreed (cumulative percentage of "slightly disagree", "disagree" and "totally disagree") that they had openly discussed these topics with their parents. A significant majority of the respondents (91.9%) stated that they "totally agreed" about the importance of trust in human relationships, with a cumulative total of 92.7% stating they had adequate knowledge about different

types of relationships between people and 69.9% believing that most teenagers have sexual relationships (Table 1). The respondents' personal experiences, perceived knowledge and attitudes may influence their perspectives and readiness in teaching and promoting sexuality education in schools in the future.

Table 1

Preservice teachers' personal experiences, perceived knowledge and attitudes related to sexuality and relationships

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6
I received reliable knowledge about sex and relationships in secondary school	33.6%	25.4%	19.7%	9.8%	5.7%	5.7%
I can talk openly about sex and relationships with my parents	22%	15.4%	20.3%	22.8%	13%	6.5%
I know a lot about different kinds of relationships between people	0%	0.8%	6.5%	17.9%	38.2%	36.6%
I agree with the statement that most teenagers (13-17) have (a) sexual relationship(s) with others	5.7%	6.5%	17.9%	19.5%	25.2%	25.2%
There are differences in the sexual roles of girls and boys	10.6%	11.4%	17.9%	27.6%	18.7%	13.8%
Trust between partners is important	0%	0%	0.8%	3.3%	4.1%	91.9%

Note. 1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = totally agree

Regarding homosexuality, approximately half of the surveyed preservice teachers (47.2%) believed that more than 15% of people self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual (Table 2a). Most of the participants (73.2%) were aware that homosexual people have historically faced social discrimination and that homosexuality was common among men in ancient Greece. Some of the respondents (65.9%) reported being aware that same sex practices are punishable by the death penalty in some countries. However, over half of the participants (54.5%) reported that they did not know the suicide rates among homosexual girls and boys (Table 2b).

Table 2*Preservice teachers' knowledge about homosexuality*

2a Questions	1	2	3	4	5
What percentage of the population of your country identifies as gay, lesbian or bisexual?	0.8%	13%	26%	47.2%	13%

Note. 1 = less than 5%, 2 = 5-10%, 3 = 11-15%, 4 = more than 15%, 5 = don't know

2b Questions	Yes	No	Don't Know
In history, homosexuals have always been socially discriminated against	73.2%	17.1%	9.8%
Scientists have always agreed that homosexuality is unnatural	13%	39%	48%
Even today, in some countries, homosexual acts are punished with the death penalty	65.9%	2.4%	31.7%
Among the ancient Greeks, homosexuality was very common among men	73.2%	2.4%	24.4%
The suicide rate of homosexual girls and boys is about five times higher than that of heterosexual girls and boys	43.1%	2.4%	54.5%

Table 3 presents the preservice teachers' attitudes towards and perceived social acceptance of homosexuality for both the total sample and heterosexuals alone. The results reveal that for 13 of the 15 statements, the mean value exceeded 3.5, the midpoint, while two statements had mean estimates below 3.5 for both the total sample and the heterosexuals alone. Notably, the highest mean score for both groups was for the statement, "It wouldn't be a problem for me if my best friend came out as gay or lesbian" (5.48 for the total sample and 5.41 for heterosexuals). In contrast, the lowest mean score was for the statement, "I would fall out with my best friend if she/he came out as gay or lesbian", with scores of 1.30 for the total sample and 1.37 for heterosexuals.

Table 3*Preservice teachers' attitudes towards homosexuality and perceived social acceptance*

Questions		1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
Homosexuality is natural	Total Sample	4.2%	5.8%	12.5%	14.2%	15%	48.3%	4.75
	Heterosexuals	5.2%	7.2%	15.5%	16.5%	17.5%	38.1%	4.48

Questions		1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
People should perceive homosexuality as equal to heterosexuality	Total Sample	4.9%	0.8%	5.7%	14.8%	11.5%	62.3%	5.14
	Heterosexuals	6.1%	1%	7.1%	18.4%	14.3%	53.1%	4.93
Gays and lesbians should have the same rights as heterosexuals	Total Sample	2.5%	1.6%	3.3%	4.9%	14.8%	73%	5.47
	Heterosexuals	3.1%	2.0%	4.1%	5.1%	17.3%	68.4%	5.37
Gays and lesbians should have the right to get married	Total Sample	4.9%	3.3%	6.5%	11.4%	12.2%	61.8%	5.08
	Heterosexuals	6.1%	4%	8.1%	14.1%	11.1%	56.6%	4.90
Gays and lesbians should have the right to adopt children	Total Sample	7.3%	10.6%	11.4%	9.8%	9.8%	51.2%	4.58
	Heterosexuals	9.1%	13.1%	13.1%	12.1%	9.1%	43.4%	4.29
I don't have any problem with two women holding hands in public	Total Sample	4.9%	2.4%	8.9%	1.6%	10.6%	71.5%	5.25
	Heterosexuals	6.1%	3%	10.1%	2%	13.1%	65.7%	5.10
I don't have any problem with two men holding hands in public	Total Sample	4.9%	2.4%	10.6%	4.9%	6.5%	70.7%	5.18
	Heterosexuals	6.1%	3%	12.1%	6.1%	8.1%	64.6%	5.01
I don't have any problem with two women kissing on the lips in public	Total Sample	13%	4.1%	10.6%	10.6%	12.2%	49.6%	4.53
	Heterosexuals	16.2%	5.1%	12.1%	11.1%	15.2%	40.4%	4.25
I don't have any problem with two men kissing on the lips in public	Total Sample	13%	8.1%	5.7%	11.4%	13%	48.8%	4.50
	Heterosexuals	16.2%	10.1%	7.1%	11.1%	16.2%	39.4%	4.19
It wouldn't be a problem for me if my best friend came out as gay or lesbian	Total Sample	1.6%	3.3%	4.1%	4.1%	10.6%	76.4%	5.48
	Heterosexuals	1%	4%	5.1%	5.1%	12.1%	72.7%	5.41
It wouldn't be a problem for my parents if my best friend came out as gay or lesbian	Total Sample	7.3%	13%	21.1%	13%	22.8%	22.8%	4.00
	Heterosexuals	6.1%	14.1%	22.2%	12.1%	22.2%	23.2%	4.00
It wouldn't be a problem for my parents if I were gay	Total Sample	26.2%	18.9%	20.5%	18%	13.1%	3.3%	2.83
	Heterosexuals	25.5%	20.4%	19.4%	16.3%	14.3%	4.1%	2.86

Questions		1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
I would fall out with my best friend if she/he came out as gay or lesbian	Total Sample	86.1%	5.7%	3.3%	3.3%	0.8%	0.8%	1.30
	Heterosexuals	82.7%	7.1%	4.1%	4.1%	1%	1%	1.37
I don't have any problem with men and women kissing each other on the lips in public	Total Sample	5.7%	4.9%	10.7%	11.5%	14.8%	52.5%	4.82
	Heterosexuals	7.1%	6.1%	11.2%	13.3%	18.4%	43.9%	4.61
I don't have any problem with men and women holding hands in public	Total Sample	3.3%	3.3%	4.1%	4.9%	11.5%	73%	5.37
	Heterosexuals	4.1%	4.1%	3.1%	6.1%	14.3%	68.4%	5.28

Note. 1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = totally agree

Table 4 illustrates the preservice teachers' attitudes towards transgender people for the total sample and heterosexuals. Except for one statement, all of the means exceeded 3.5, the midpoint, ranging from 4.16 to 5.14 for the total sample and from 3.78 to 4.97 for heterosexuals. The highest means for both groups were for "I would have no problem with my best friend coming out as transgender", while the lowest were for "My parents would be fine with me being transgender" (2.35 for the total sample and 2.39 for heterosexuals).

Table 4

Preservice teachers' attitudes towards transgender people

Questions		1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
Transgender people should be allowed to be who they are	Total Sample	2.5%	5.8%	9.2%	12.5%	10.8%	59.2%	5.00
	Heterosexuals	3.1%	7.3%	11.5%	13.5%	13.5%	51%	4.80
Transgender people should have the same rights as heterosexuals	Total Sample	2.5%	4.2%	5%	16.7%	8.3%	63.3%	5.14
	Heterosexuals	3.1%	5.2%	6.3%	18.8%	10.4%	56.3%	4.97
Transgender people should have the right to adopt children	Total Sample	17.4%	10.7%	7.4%	12.4%	6.6%	45.5%	4.16
	Heterosexuals	21.6%	13.4%	9.3%	12.4%	7.2%	36.1%	3.78
I would have no problem with my best friend coming out as transgender	Total Sample	2.5%	8.3%	9.2%	10%	5%	65%	5.02
	Heterosexuals	3.1%	10.4%	11.5%	10.4%	6.3%	58.3%	4.81

Questions		1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
My parents would be fine with me being transgender	Total Sample	39.2%	21.7%	17.5%	12.5%	5%	4.2%	2.35
	Heterosexuals	38.5%	20.8%	18.8%	11.5%	6.3%	4.2%	2.39

Note. 1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = totally agree

When the participants were asked how their university treats people with different sexual orientations, 69.2% of the total sample disagreed with the view that heterosexual and homosexual students were treated differently at their university. However, 38% stated that it would scare them to come out as gay or lesbian at their university, while 46.2% (cumulative percentages) expressed similar concerns regarding coming out as transgender (Table 5).

Table 5

Preservice teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards sexual diversity in university

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6
At my university, heterosexual and homosexual students are treated differently	26.7%	20.8%	21.7%	21.7%	5.8%	3.3%
I would be scared to come out as homosexual (gay or lesbian) at my university	28.1%	14%	19.8%	19%	10.7%	8.3%
I would be scared to come out as transgender at my university	16.5%	14.9%	22.3%	13.2%	16.5%	16.5%

Note. 1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = totally agree

Table 6 presents the findings for the preservice teachers' perceived knowledge of and attitudes towards teaching sexuality issues. The highest mean scores for the total sample and for the non-heterosexual participants were found for the statements "I think it is important that students learn about homosexuality at school" (5.30 for the total sample and 5.71 for non-heterosexuals) and "I think it is important that students learn about transgender people at school" (5.14 for the total sample and 5.71 for non-heterosexuals). In contrast, the lowest mean scores were found for the statement, "I have learned about LGBT issues during my teacher training (it is part of the curriculum)" (2.18 for the total sample and 2.26 for non-heterosexuals). These findings indicate a gap between preservice positive attitudes towards students learning about homosexuality and transgender people and their actual knowledge for supporting this learning and students in practice in their future classrooms.

Table 6

Preservice teachers' attitudes towards and perceived knowledge of teaching sexuality-related issues

Questions		1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
I think it is important that students learn about homosexuality at school	Total Sample	1.7%	1.7%	6.7%	10.1%	14.3%	65.5%	5.30
	Hetero-sexuals excluded	0%	0%	4.2%	0%	16.7%	79.2%	5.71
I think it is important that students learn about transgender people at school	Total Sample	3.4%	2.5%	8.4%	9.2%	15.1%	61.3%	5.14
	Hetero-sexuals excluded	0%	0%	4.2%	0%	20.8%	75%	5.71
I have enough knowledge of LGBT issues to answer my students if they have questions	Total Sample	5.9%	16%	16%	31.1%	11.8%	19.3%	3.85
	Hetero-sexuals excluded	0%	4.2%	12.5%	33.3%	25%	25%	4.54
I would feel comfortable answering my students if they had questions about LGBT issues	Total Sample	1.7%	7.6%	11%	14.4%	21.2%	44.1%	4.78
	Hetero-sexuals excluded	0%	0%	0%	12.5%	20.8%	66.7%	5.54
I know where to look for support and resources on LGBT	Total Sample	16%	15.1%	21.8%	15.1%	19.3%	12.6%	3.44
	Hetero-sexuals excluded	8.3%	8.3%	16.7%	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%	4.08
I know where to send students who need professional support on LGBT issues	Total Sample	22.2%	17.1%	24.8%	16.2%	10.3%	9.4%	3.03
	Hetero-sexuals excluded	20.8%	8.3%	29.2%	8.3%	20.8%	12.5%	3.37
I have learned about LGBT issues during my teacher training (it is part of the curriculum)	Total Sample	51.7%	16.1%	11.9%	10.2%	3.4%	6.8%	2.18
	Hetero-sexuals excluded	43.5%	26.1%	8.7%	13%	0%	8.7%	2.26
I would like to spend more time learning about LGBT issues during my teacher training	Total Sample	3.4%	6.8%	13.7%	12%	23.1%	41%	4.67
	Hetero-sexuals excluded	0%	0%	4.3%	8.7%	21.7%	65.2%	5.48

Note. 1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = totally agree

Finally, the surveyed preservice teachers were asked two open-ended questions. The first question asked about the resources that would be useful in creating an LGBT+ friendly school. Regarding material resources, the preservice teachers emphasised the need for more information about LGBT+ issues that could be used in classes and seminars or included in sexuality education courses. For example, one participant said, *“There should be information brochures that are clear and simple for everyone to understand”* (P34), while another mentioned *“educational programs to prevent bullying towards LGBT individuals...”* (P40). In terms of human resources, the preservice teachers highlighted the need for qualified teachers who would pave the way for diversity and respect for human rights, as well as the need for psychologists and counsellors in school. For example, one participant stated, *“recruit teachers who hold views that will help children to accept and respect diversity”* (P32), while another added *“psychologists in educational centers”* (P23) and a third suggested *“school counsellors for students and teachers”* (P28). Additionally, some participants identified the need for gender-neutral spaces in schools, such as shared toilets and changing rooms.

Towards the end of the survey, the preservice teachers were requested to share any additional comments they would like to make. Some referred to the need for societal change for LGBT+ people, including the deconstruction of stereotypes, the cessation of discrimination, greater acceptance of sexual diversity and the ability of LGBT+ people to express their identities without fear or hesitation. One participant said, *“It is time for society [...] to accept diversity, no matter where it comes from”* (P16), while another participant said, *“Is there anything better than living the way each person wants and feels? Respect and love towards diversity”* (P1).

Discussion

The present study investigated Greek preservice teachers’ knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual diversity and sexuality education as part the KA2 Erasmus+ project “All Incl! Building LGBT+ friendly schools across Europe”. The participants, who were predominantly heterosexual, stated that they had lacked compulsory sexuality education during their own school life.

Preservice Teachers’ Knowledge Regarding Sexual Diversity

Most of the surveyed preservice teachers reported having a low level of knowledge about sex and relationships during their own secondary education,

which is consistent with previous studies showing limited coverage of sexuality education in Greek schools (Chiou & Sideri, 2022; Gerouki, 2011). Although they did not receive compulsory sexuality education in schools, it is evident that they are aware of sexual diversity and different types of relationships, probably from various information sources (e.g., magazines, TV, web, etc.). It is important to note that LGBT+ activism in Greece has been more combative during the last two decades, and that legislative alterations over the last 15 years have contributed to granting rights to LGBT+ individuals. Additionally, the non-compulsory health education programmes, introduced into Greek schools in 1995 and 2003 (Gerouki, 2011) have addressed topics regarding gender relationships, while issues related to sexual diversity are also found in biology and home economics courses, mainly focused on the biological aspect of sexuality (Chiou & Sideri, 2022). Based on the specific questions asked, it is noteworthy that although the participating preservice teachers acknowledge the historical social discrimination against LGBT+ people and are aware that in some countries LGBT+ discrimination may potentially lead to the death penalty, they have difficulty connecting social discrimination against LGBT+ people with suicide rates or with the role of science in denouncing homosexuality as an illness. This finding suggests that preservice teachers need in-depth theoretical and practical training during their initial teacher education, which would contribute to the recognition of the systemic nature of discrimination (Blair & Deckman, 2019, 2020). Similar suggestions are proposed for early childhood preservice teachers in Greece by Brouskeli and Sapountzis (2017). Lack of awareness of gender and sexual diversity issues, or limited awareness, may affect teacher self-efficacy (Swackhamer et al., 2019). Therefore, teachers' awareness of sexual diversity and the systemic and individual factors that influence possible discrimination may contribute to their reflections on LGBT+ issues and to the promotion of inclusive practices in school settings (Huertas-Abril & Palacios-Hidalgo, 2022).

Preservice Teachers' Attitudes Towards and Perceptions of Homosexual and Transgender People

The majority of the surveyed preservice teachers were supportive of equality among heterosexual, homosexual and transgender people, as well as of the right of transgender people to be who they are. This aligns with findings from similar research involving in-service teachers, which also showed a high level of sensitivity towards sexual diversity from both the personal and the professional perspective (Knežević, 2024). However, the preservice teachers in the present study were more hesitant to strongly agree with child adoption

by homosexual or transgender individuals. These results were not unexpected. Greek society is characterised by a short history of gender equality, only dating back to the 1990s (Chiou & Sideri, 2022). In addition, there is a strong affiliation between the state and the Greek Orthodox Church, which is known for its conservative ideas concerning sexual diversity (Karagiannis, 2009), its influence on individuals' attitudes (Grigoropoulos, 2025; Papadaki et al., 2013) and its support for the traditional family. Conservative values, religious beliefs and religiosity, enhanced by the Church, have been shown to negatively influence attitudes towards sexual diversity (Grigoropoulos, 2025), while previous gender and sexuality education has been identified as a positive factor for reduced sexual diversity prejudice among students (Costa et al., 2015). Potential conservative values, combined with the reported lack of adequate sexuality education, may therefore have contributed to the participants' more hesitant attitudes towards child adoption by transgender individuals and same-sex expression of affection in public.

The surveyed preservice teachers were receptive to the idea of their best friend coming out as gay or lesbian, which can be attributed to the personification of people who identify as gay or lesbian. However, they were slightly less open to the idea of their best friend coming out as transgender. In general, their attitudes and perceptions towards transgender people were consistently less positive than their attitudes towards homosexual individuals, indicating that there is probably more scepticism and less familiarity and comfort with regard to transgender people. Blair and Deckman (2019) have also documented preservice teachers' unfamiliarity and cognitive and emotional distance with regard to transgender people.

In response to the hypothetical scenario of their coming out as homosexual or transgender, the majority of the preservice teachers reported that this would not be accepted by their parents, which demonstrates that Greek families may not yet be ready to embrace and accept sexual diversity, especially if it concerns their own children. These results indicate that Greek society still hesitates to openly accept and support sexual diversity, especially within the microsystem of the family, which adds to the interpretation of the preservice teachers' reluctance to discuss sex and relationships with their family. This alienation probably prevents children coming out as LGBT+, increases misunderstandings within families, and, in some cases, leads parents to reject their children when they finally do come out (Chiou & Sideri, 2025).

Preservice Teachers' Attitudes Towards and Perceptions of Sexual Diversity in University Environments

The participating preservice teachers have a positive picture of the inclusivity of their study setting, claiming that sexual diversity is not treated differently within the university environment. The positive attitudes of the academic staff towards homosexual students in Greek universities have also been documented in previous research (Chiou et al., 2023), while university students' acceptance of sexual diversity in educational environments has been supported by Magnus and Lundin (2016). However, 38% of the surveyed preservice teachers reported that they would be scared to come out as gay or lesbian at their university, and 46.2% stated that they would be afraid to come out as transgender. It is assumed that their fear of coming out in the university setting, despite its openness to sexual diversity, indicates that young people, based on prior experiences, are likely to retain an awareness that LGBT+ people are discriminated against, which may affect their decision to come out. Recent research (Wiest, 2024) has revealed that sexual minorities, especially gay boys, face more challenges in their school settings than straight students.

Preservice Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Sexuality Education and Initial Teacher Education

Notably, only 21.2% of the surveyed preservice teachers reported having received reliable knowledge about sexuality issues during their own secondary education, while their initial teacher education does not appear to have enhanced their sexuality-related knowledge enough. These findings shed light on preservice teachers' perceptions of their difficulty as future teachers in helping students to find professional support, answering their questions about sexual diversity issues, and looking for support and resources on LGBT+ issues. Preservice teachers' unpreparedness in addressing sexuality education issues as future teachers is also documented in relevant research (Brouskeli & Sapountzis, 2017; Lee & Carpenter, 2014).

Despite the limited knowledge scores on sexual diversity issues recorded by the questionnaire's specific items, as well as the uncertainty in addressing sexuality education topics in classrooms as future teachers, it is critical and encouraging that preservice teachers stress the need for sexuality education in schools. They openly support the importance of teaching issues related to sexual diversity in schools, and most of them are willing to put time into receiving the relevant training and be well prepared within the framework of their initial teacher education. The need for theoretical and practical training and for more tools and opportunities for supporting sexual diversity and sexuality

education-related issues in schools (Blair & Deckman, 2019, 2020; Brouskeli & Sapountzis, 2017), as well as the adoption of pedagogical methods and integration of queer pedagogy in initial teacher education curricula (Dunkerly et al., 2022), are considered essential. Such initiatives will potentially raise preservice teachers' awareness of sexual diversity and sexuality education-related issues, thus improving their self-efficacy (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013) and their instructional competency to address these issues as future teachers in their classrooms (Huertas-Abril & Palacios-Hidalgo, 2022). Preservice teachers' awareness of diversity issues will probably contribute to their self-reflection on diversity and the promotion of inclusion in school settings (Huertas-Abril & Palacios-Hidalgo, 2022).

Conclusion

The present study provides evidence on preservice teachers' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual diversity and education. The findings reveal that preservice teachers lack sufficient teaching knowledge regarding sexual diversity and feel insufficiently prepared to support sexuality education and related issues in their future classrooms. Content knowledge is widely recognised as a fundamental component of effective teaching, framed by pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Limited content knowledge on sexual diversity issues may affect preservice teachers' teaching on related topics in the future. Despite their general support for equality among individuals with diverse sexual orientation, the participants reported hesitant attitudes towards homosexual and transgender individuals, as well as limited related training during their initial teacher education. This highlights the importance of initial teacher education that includes comprehensive training on sexuality issues and prepares preservice teachers for addressing related issues in schools.

Over the last two decades, the European Union and its member states have developed or strengthened standards on non-discrimination and equality for LGBT+ people (Geunis, 2022; Holz & Geunis, 2019). Within the framework of such initiatives, the significant role of education and teachers cannot be underestimated. Well-prepared teachers possessing sufficient knowledge and enhanced teaching competencies to promote sexuality education in schools could support the successful implementation of comprehensive sexuality education programmes in schools in the future.

Limitations

The present study has three main limitations. Firstly, the sample may consist of people particularly interested in sexual diversity. Research with a larger and more diverse sample would better reflect the attitudes and perceptions within the overall population of preservice teachers in Greece, reducing self-selection bias. Secondly, the inability of universities to provide us with figures on the total number of prospective teachers they were training limited our ability to determine the response rate. Thirdly, since the sample consists of prospective secondary education teachers, the findings may not be applicable to preservice primary education teachers, whose studies are focused on pedagogy, and who may have different knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual diversity and education.

The study nonetheless provides preliminary insights into preservice teachers' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual diversity and sexuality education in secondary education in Greece. Future research with larger and more diverse samples across all education levels could further explore attitudes towards gender-affirmative procedures and shed more light on preservice teachers' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual diversity and education.

Implications

The present study has several implications. It is essential that compulsory courses be incorporated in initial teacher education in order to enhance preservice teachers' awareness and knowledge of sexual diversity, particularly in school settings. Raising their awareness of sexual diversity issues is likely to contribute to a better understanding of the need to support sexuality education in schools, while enhancing their knowledge of these issues will equip them with the content knowledge required to teach related topics in the classrooms. Additionally, initial teacher education could promote supervised teaching practice in real educational settings, allowing preservice teachers to design lesson plans on relevant issues and implement them in classrooms. Alternatively, initial teacher education could promote service-based learning, offering preservice teachers' the possibility to collaborate with local LGBT+ communities and organisations, thus raising their awareness of the challenges these groups face and fostering their knowledge of sexual diversity issues.

Further initiatives from the Greek Ministry of Education and the Institute of Educational Policy, such as free training seminars on sexuality education and skills workshops, could be provided in cooperation with LGBT+ organisations, teacher training institutions and initial teacher education in order to

equip preservice teachers with the tools and resources required to effectively teach about sexual diversity.

Finally, teacher educators should be prepared to face reluctance or negative stances from some preservice teachers due to their religious beliefs or personal views on sexual diversity issues. This could be achieved by emphasising the importance of creating inclusive classrooms for all students, regardless of their sexual identity or orientation, as well as highlighting the vital role of teachers in fostering the awareness of diversity in today's society. As Kuhar and Zobec (2017) emphasise, teachers should not avoid addressing diversity in schools, including gender and sexual diversity, even if it is not aligned with the beliefs of the students or their parents. The underlying perspective is that students should be confronted with and learn to respect diversity.

Ethical Statement

The research study was approved by the School of Business and Economics, Maastricht University, Ethical Review Committee Inner City faculties (ERCIC), Reference: ERCIC_367_15_06_2022.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated during this study are not publicly available due to ethical and confidentiality restrictions related to the protection of the research participants, but will be made available upon reasonable request.

Disclosure Statement

This work was granted by the KA2 Erasmus+ Project “All Inc! Building LGBT+ friendly schools across Europe” (2020–2023) (Project Code: 2020-1-NL01-KA2021-064556).

The authors declare that they have not used any AI tools to support the writing process. The authors accept full responsibility for the content and integrity of the publication.

Acknowledgement

This work was part of the KA2 Erasmus+ Project “All Inc! Building LGBT+ friendly schools across Europe”, (Project Code: 2020-1-NL01-KA2021-064556).

References

- Bartulović, M., & Kušević, B. (2024). When does “too early” become “too late”? Reflections of Croatian secondary school educators on the persistence of LGBT taboos in the education system. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 14(2), 39–61. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.1327>
- Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus Open*, 2, 8–14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001>
- Blair, E. E., & Deckman, S. L. (2019). “We cannot imagine”: US preservice teachers’ Othering of trans and gender creative student experiences. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, Article 102915. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102915>
- Blair, E. E., & Deckman, S. L. (2020). “Distressing” situations and differentiated interventions: Pre-service teachers’ imagined futures with trans and gender-creative students. *Teachers College Record the Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 122(7), 1–38. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/le_pubs/311/
- Braeken, D., & Cardinal, M. (2008). Comprehensive sexuality education as a means of promoting sexual health. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 20(1–2), 50–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19317610802157051>
- Brouske, V., & Sapountzis, A. (2017). Early childhood sexuality education: Future educators’ attitudes and considerations. *Research in Education*, 99(1), 56–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523717740149>
- Chiou, V., Petracou, E., & Skourtou E. (2023). How inclusive is Greek higher education? Attitudes and practices of faculty staff and students’ experiences on inclusive education at tertiary level. In N. Oruc Erturk, & A. Yurekli (Eds.), *Inclusive education. Definition and conceptual framework* (pp. 119–148). Waxmann.
- Chiou, V., & Sideri, M. (2022). Sexuality education and national policies for LGBT+ people in Greece. In K. De Witte, O. Holz, & L. Geunis (Eds.), *A little respect? LGBT+ perspectives on education from across Europe* (pp. 107–128). Waxmann.
- Chiou, V., & Sideri, M. (2025). Greek parents’ perceptions and attitudes toward sexuality education and sexual diversity. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 12(6), 163–176. <https://oapub.org/edu/index.php/ejes/article/view/6013>
- Costa, A. B., Peroni, R. O., De Camargo, E. S., Pasley, A., & Nardi, H. C. (2015). Prejudice toward gender and sexual diversity in a Brazilian public university: Prevalence, awareness, and the effects of education. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 12(4), 261–272. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-015-0191-z>
- Coulter, R. W. S., Colvin, S., Onufer, L. R., Arnold, G., Akiva, T., D’Ambrogio, E., & Davis, V. (2020). Training pre-service teachers to better serve LGBTQ high school students. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 47(2), 234–254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2020.1851137>
- Cutler, B., Adams, M., & Jenkins, L. (2021). Working towards LGBTIQ-inclusive education: Perceptions of pre-service teachers’ comfort and emotional experience. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 50(3), 295–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2021.2010274>

- De Witte, K., & Holz, O. (2013). Gender specific education in 12 European countries – a comparison. In O. Holz, & F. Shelton (Eds.), *Education & Gender. Gender specific education in different countries. Historical aspects – current trends* (pp. 159–174). Waxmann.
- De Witte, K., Holz, O., & Geunis, L. (2018). Coming out. A comparative analysis of pupils', teachers' and parents' perspectives in eight European countries. In K. De Witte, O. Holz, & L. Geunis (Eds.), *Somewhere over the rainbow. Discussions on homosexuality in education across Europe* (pp. 11–27). Waxmann.
- De Witte, K., Itebeke, K., & Holz, O. (2019). Teachers' and pupils' perspectives on homosexuality: A comparative analysis across European countries. *International Sociology*, 34(4), 471–519.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580919854295>
- Dunkerly, J. M., Poplin, J., & Taylor, V. S. (2022). *Facilitating LGBTQIA+ allyship through multimodal writing in the elementary classroom*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003110934>
- European Expert Group on Sexuality Education. (2015). Sexuality education – what is it? *Sex Education*, 16(4), 427–431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2015.1100599>
- Gerouki, M. (2011). Η Σεξουαλική Αγωγή στο Σχολείο. Θεωρία και πράξη. Οι απόψεις των εκπαιδευτικών [Sexuality education in school. Theory and practice. Teachers' views]. Marathia Publications.
- Geunis, L. (2019). Beyond biology. The aims, approaches and impact of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). In V. Chiou, O. Holz, N. Oruc Erturk, & F. Shelton (Eds.), *International insights: Equality in education* (pp. 107–115). Waxmann.
- Geunis, L. (2022). Europe: Research, recommendations and reflections on LGBT+ in education. In K. De Witte, O. Holz, & L. Geunis (Eds.), *A little respect? LGBT+ perspectives on education from across Europe* (pp. 107–128). Waxmann.
- Geunis, L., Hernandez Recabarren, T., Holz, O., & De Witte, K. (2022). A comparative analysis of pupils' perspectives in eight European countries. In K. De Witte, O. Holz, & L. Geunis (Eds.), *A little respect? LGBT+ perspectives on education from across Europe* (pp. 27–41). Waxmann.
- Grigoropoulos, I. (2025). Exploring the underlying social conservative mechanisms of trans-negativity in a convenient Greek sample. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 22, 85–100.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-024-00996-3>
- Holz, O., & Geunis, L. (2019). Homo'poly. Helping schools, teachers and pupils build awareness and understanding of homosexuality. In V. Chiou, O. Holz, N. Oruc Erturk, & F. Shelton (Eds.), *International insights: Equality in education* (pp. 135–144). Waxmann.
- Holz, O., & Geunis, L. (2021). Co-creating LGBT+ friendly schools across Europe. In V. Chiou, O. Holz, N. Oruc Erturk, & F. Shelton (Eds.), *Voices from the classroom: A celebration of learning* (pp. 142–156). Waxmann.
- Huertas-Abril, C., & Palacios-Hidalgo, F. J. (2022). LGBTIQ+ issues in teacher education: A study of Spanish pre-service teachers' attitudes. *Teachers and Teaching*, 28(4), 461–474.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2022.2062740>
- Karagiannis, E. (2009). Secularism in context: The relations between the Greek State and the Church

of Greece in crisis. *European Journal of Sociology*, 50(1), 133–167.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003975609000447>

Knežević, Z. (2024). Primary school teachers' personal and professional beliefs on diversity. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 14(3), 213–235. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.1629>

Kuhar, R., & Zobec, A. (2017). The anti-gender movement in Europe and the educational process in public schools. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 7(2), 29–46.

<https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.168>

Leader-Janssen, E. M., & Rankin-Erickson, J. L. (2013). Preservice teachers' content knowledge and self-efficacy for teaching reading. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 52(3), 204–229.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2013.781253>

Lee, D., & Carpenter, V. M. (2014). “What would you like me to do? Lie to you?” Teacher education responsibilities to LGBTI students. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(2), 169–180.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866x.2014.932331>

Magnus, C. D., & Lundin, M. (2016). Challenging norms: University students' views on heteronormativity as a matter of diversity and inclusion in initial teacher education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 79, 76–85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.06.006>

Neto, J. N. (2018). Queer pedagogy: Approaches to inclusive teaching. *Policy Futures in Education*, 16(5), 589–604. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210317751273>

Papadaki, V., Plotnikof, K., & Papadaki, E. (2013). Social work students' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men: The case of the Social Work Department in Crete, Greece. *Social Work Education*, 32(4), 453–467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2012.687371>

Parker, R., Wellings, K., & Lazarus, J. V. (2009). Sexuality education in Europe: An overview of current policies. *Sex Education*, 9(3), 227–242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681810903059060>

Rónay, Z., Csereklye, E., Kenesei, A., Miklós, B., & Kormos, K. (2022). Should schools follow policy-makers? A brief overview of the challenges and reflections of the LGBTQI+ members of Hungary. In K. De Witte, O. Holz, & L. Geunis (Eds.), *A little respect? LGBT+ perspectives on education from across Europe* (pp. 129–144). Waxmann.

Staley, S. (2022). Learning through practice: Conceptualizing the demands of queer-inclusive teaching. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 53(2), 126–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2022.2089004>

Swackhamer, L. E., Koellner, K., Basile, C., & Kimbrough, D. (2009). Increasing the self-efficacy of inservice teachers through content knowledge. *Teacher Education Quarterly (Claremont, Calif.)*, 36(2), 63–78. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ857476.pdf>

Wiest, L. R. (2024). Gay boys' experiences and outcomes in pre-tertiary education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 125, Article 102358. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2024.102358>

Biographical note

VANA CHIOU, PhD, is a faculty member (Laboratory Teaching Staff) in the Department of Geography at the University of the Aegean, Greece. Her research interests include contemporary methods of teaching, assessment, teacher training, and inclusion in education. She is co-editor of the book series “Voices from the Classroom” (Waxmann Publications). Her published work includes edited volumes, book chapters, and articles in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings. She has participated in and co-coordinated various European projects.

MARIA SIDERI holds a PhD on Social Anthropology. She teaches at the Department of Cultural Technology and Communication of the University of the Aegean and she is member of the “Privacy Engineering and Social Informatics (PrivaSI)” research laboratory team (same Department). She has served as a member of the Gender Equality Committee of the University of the Aegean. Her research interests focus on: Identity construction on social media; social media, privacy and social control; social media and politics; gender issues; intercultural communication. She has written several papers in peer-reviewed journals and international conference proceedings.