

Promoting the Inclusion of LGBTIQ2S+ Cultural Competency Outcomes in
School Professional Learning: Through the Eyes of Youth

Kerry L. Maguire

University of Alberta

EDPS 900: Directed Research Project

December, 2020

Dr. Larry Prochner

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	5
Imagining Culturally Competent Professional Development for School Culture. Transformation	9
Imagining Students Involved in the Learning Process for Educators and Students	14
Discussion	19
References	22

Cultural Competency is a term gaining more and more traction within educational systems today due to an increase in the diversity of the student population, and school staff populations. The steps needed to better address the social, emotional, and educational needs of students from different cultural backgrounds within our schools is achievable, but requires a great deal of focus and meaningful professional development for all school staff. Our current definition of cultural competency can be broadened to include sexual and gender minority students and their unique cultural context within a majority straight and cisgender society. Often the inclusion of topics related to the LGBTQ2S+ community in schools and classrooms is ignored or purposefully omitted because of a multitude of reasons including, but not limited to, teachers' lack of knowledge on the topic, the assumption that there are no students in their class that identify as a sexual or gender minority, not feeling comfortable with the topic, or fear of reprisal from their administration or parents and guardians (Payne & Smith, 2018). The principal as the role model and leader is key for beginning to change the school system for the better, as Organizational Change Theory suggests. If a school desires to change their school culture to be more inclusive and supportive of student diversity the principal must begin by educating the staff in authentic, meaningful ways so that everyone can begin to understand what the issues are for minority groups within the school system, and society as a whole.

There are many people within the school system who are allies and working to promote equity for sexual and gender minority youth. In my work as a consultant, working to build the capacity within schools to support sexual and gender minority students, staff, and families, I have encountered a great deal of supportive staff members who can acknowledge what is needed for sexual and gender minority students to succeed at school and can identify what is needed

through a lens of equity. While teaching in a high school and being the Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) advisor, I have encountered many students who are confident in their identities and are able to describe the aspects of their daily lives at school that do not work well for them. Their lived experiences and firsthand knowledge of schools can, and should, be recognized, respected, and included in the professional learning of school staff on a regular basis. Including the voice of youth in the professional learning outcomes of educators is meaningful. Not only for the educators who receive a lived experience description of the commonplace practices within schools, but also for the students whose voices are heard. Students as active participants in school reform can help to increase the tension and focus on pressing issues when needed (Mitra & Gross, 2009). When students are engaged in the change process, their connection to school increases and many LGBTQ2S+ youth currently do not feel connected to or have a sense of belonging in their school (Short, 2017). Expanding our understanding of cultural competency to include aspects of LGBTQ2S+ identities and including the voices of LGBTQ2S+ youth in the professional learning of educators is beneficial to both the students and the educators who participate. I explore how LGBTQ2S+ culture and identity can be included in the learning under the umbrella of cultural competency as participants start with an examination of their own biases towards people who are different from themselves. I also explore how including youth in creating and presenting the professional learning for educators can be beneficial for both the educators, as they learn first hand how practices in their schools can affect vulnerable populations, and for the youth who are provided the space to speak and help shape their own education.

The relevant literature I have found in my searches falls into three different categories that will support my research topic and question. The first category focuses specifically on the

concept of cultural competency whether that is in education, nursing, or counseling. I have found the majority of my literature about cultural competence in the context of the counseling practice. The second category focuses on the concept of motivation and how educational leaders can help to motivate their staff to change their practices as educators. This category also examines the characteristics of leadership that are important for building trusting relationships with staff in order to support them through a process of change. The third category that my references belong to is that of professional development related to cultural competency. This has been an area where I have yet to find a vast array of professional development types, as most have referenced ethnic cultural competency outcomes and advise for international experiences during preservice training. I did not find research related to the inclusion of student voice in cultural competency professional learning for educators.

Theoretical Framework

For the purposes of creating a meaningful professional development strategy for principals to implement change within their school staff, Organizational Change Theory (Fullan, 2006) is the best fit. The problem of LGBTQ2S+ student inclusion in our schools is a systemic one. School culture does not change drastically over a short period of time. It takes time for the principal to build a relationship with the staff and students in a building, as well as the parents and community members that surround it and influence the environment in which they will need to navigate to create change. Organizational Change Theory takes into consideration the whole system and the interactions among other systems. The theory identifies the school as the epicentre of change, then moving beyond a single school to initiate change more broadly throughout the system. School leaders are in a place of power, where they are expected to meet

the educational, physical, emotional, and social needs of the students in their building, yet they can still be unaware of the needs of a certain vulnerable population, such as LGBTQ2S+ youth. The education system is in a constant state of reform, with the changes to our governing body every four years, structural changes to a school division, or current trends in educational theory. Corsi describes this paradox by describing the system of education as an “institution of permanent reform” (2020, p.689). As educators, we are used to this constant change. It is why we have professional learning embedded in our profession, and why many of us continue our formal education while working in the profession. The change we are most used to though is systemic change that challenges the very ways that educators interact with their students, and suggest that they may have biases that affect how they treat certain students.

Organizational Change Theory helps leaders develop procedures that include and value the perspectives of students, parents, and teachers, as well as other stakeholders in the process of change (Fullan, 2006). The role of the principal in creating systemic change within a school is crucial as they need to be the one to identify the problem, find the resources and lead the rest of the school staff towards the new intended outcome. An important principle in Change Theory is that organizations do not change until individuals within the organization change (Chance, 2009). Teachers often mean well but do not understand the challenges that LGBTQ2S+ youth face in schools. They may be aware of some teasing, or bullying but not understand the need to incorporate LGBTQ2S+ topics and experiences in their classroom setting. They may also be unwilling to address the needs of sexual and gender minority youth, or provide the learning opportunities to other staff to meet those needs (Payne & Smith, 2018). In my experience, although working for a progressive school Division and having inclusive policy in place to provide the space and support for LGBTQ2S+ inclusion, the decision whether or not to take on

the challenge of creating positive change for students lies in the hands of the principal. Evans (1996) suggests that in order for those in an organization to accept the change, the rationale for the change must fit within their beliefs and understanding about the world. This is where meaningful, and relevant professional learning comes into play. The principal must identify ways to ensure that the staff understands the value of making changes within the school culture that will greatly benefit a certain group of students, not only for their immediate educational success but benefit them for the rest of their lives. One of the first steps in gaining cultural competence is identifying one's own biases. In order for a group of individuals to be able to do that, they must commit to the process fully, and be supported through the process by a principal who is genuine and authentic in their desire for an improved school culture for LGBTQ2S+ youth.

Transformational Leadership Theory is a way that principals can structure their own actions and lead change within their schools as James MacGregor Burns proposed "leadership is inseparable from followers' needs and goals and is a result of the interactions between the leaders and the followers." (Chance, 2013, p.93). The need for teachers to meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of their students is front and centre of what the principal aims to help their staff with, through professional development. Transformational leadership involves an engagement between leaders and followers bound by common purpose, where leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. In the case of social justice learning, the principal will likely have to learn alongside the rest of the staff as they negotiate with the challenges of the educational system and learn from the students that it impacts on a daily basis.

As Bourdieu describes in his writing on the forms of capital, schools are structured to reproduce social capital. That social capital that Bourdieu describes is built to reproduce the

norms of the middle class (1983). Educational institutions are built with an “inherent... common sense view, which sees academic success or failure as an effect of natural aptitudes...”

(Bourdieu, 1983, p.47). I can elaborate and say that schools are built to meet the needs of, and reproduce the qualities desired in a society which values white, middle class, cisgender, straight and able-bodied individuals. If educators truly want to make a difference and create more equitable learning environments for students, it is essential to look at the larger system of education which was never designed to offer equitable educational opportunities for all students when it was designed and created, and as the system continues to be perpetuated now. Not only must educators make change within their own schools, but they must advocate for greater systemic change, and a place for all students within the education system. Reynolds discusses at length the challenges of professionals working within oppressive systems to resist burnout, and the need for collective care (2011). She explains that “the ineffable, intangible and untraceable influences of our collective work cannot be measured. Much of the work we do in the margins goes unmeasured for lack of an instrument of measurement, or because what we do achieve is not prioritized, or recognized as having value.” (2011, p.36). It is my belief that the greatest change must come from the dismantling of the oppressive aspects of the institution itself, and in order to do that, justice education for educators must come first. It cannot be an individual endeavour, but a collective movement. Educators must begin to understand how the system they work within, and have a strong sense of belonging to, works in favour of some students and against others. Some of this learning can take place through professional learning that helps educators examine their own biases, and learn from the lived experiences of others, what barriers some of the marginalized students in schools face every day.

Imagining Culturally Competent Professional Development for School Culture Transformation

The framework of cultural competency is becoming more common in the repertoire of educational leaders and teachers. Within the Alberta Government’s Leadership Quality Standard (2018), there is space for school leaders to work with staff to develop culturally responsive practices. The competency *Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context* provides guidance to the school leader to “engage local community partners to understand local contexts”, and encourages school leaders to “facilitate school community members’ understanding of local, provincial, national, and international issues and trends related to education” (Alberta Education, 2018). In my experience of working in schools and as a consultant in Diversity Education with Edmonton Public Schools, I have seen an increase over the past ten years of support and awareness about the needs of newcomer and refugee students and families, as well as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. I have also seen an increase in the support available and the awareness of the needs of LGBTQ2S+ students in our schools. The issue is that as a school system, if we desire to be activists and defend the rights of marginalized students, we have to look at all marginalized students with the same lens. The connection between the need for improvements in the educational system for indigenous, refugees and newcomers, and ethnically diverse students is not yet being compared to the need for improvement of LGBTQ2S+ youth in our schools. If we were to look at the issues in an intersectional way, we would be able to make many more connections and do justice to more vulnerable and marginalized groups of students in our schools.

Adopting the framework of cultural competency and culturally responsive education would give us the opportunity to address all of the inequalities using the same references, and the

same methods, because the language would then be universal. Currently, the challenges faced by LGBTQ2S+ youth in our schools are not being addressed as a possible lack of cultural competency by educators, but it can and should be looked at through this lens. Professional development for educators focused on understanding the cultural context for refugee and newcomer students, or First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students is also relevant for LGBTQ2S+ students. Although there are many educators with increasing and more robust knowledge, as well as their own lived experiences of being LGBTQ2S+ there is still work to be done in this area.

From my own experience of being out to my family and peers as gay in high school, I can speak regarding how school was not set up to affirm my identity. I attended affluent schools in an urban setting throughout my school years. I did not know that I was gay until I met a friend in grade ten who told me that he was gay. It was not until that encounter that I had even met someone who identified as non-straight. Throughout ten years of formal education, I had never heard about people who were not straight. Not through literature, current events, sports, or any guest presenters. Once I was aware of my sexual orientation, I began to notice aspects of my schooling that reinforced heteronormativity and heterosexism. In Career and Life Management (CALM) class, one of our assignments was to create a group project and present it to the class on one topic from a predetermined list of options. The list included topics such as sexually transmitted infections, drug addiction, and homosexuality. Of course one can recognize that grouping homosexuality with topics related to disease, response to trauma, etc. is problematic and inherently value laden. A friend and I chose to tackle the topic of homosexuality and agreed that we needed to provide the class with some significant learning opportunities. My classmate and I made a plan to go to the non-profit centre for LGBTQ2S+ support and talk to one of their staff about getting resources and information for our presentation. The person we spoke to at the

centre was an educator and offered to come into our CALM class for our presentation. They explained the activity they could conduct, and the information they would share, and we agreed. It was not until we let our teacher know that we had a guest speaker lined up to present that the challenges were revealed. I was called down to the principal's office to explain who the person was, where they worked, and how to contact them. The presentation did take place, but through the experience it was made very clear to me that the topic was a taboo one, not to be addressed beyond the very basics.

In order to move a school toward cultural proficiency the school leader must support the staff to begin with a process of critical self-reflection (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2017). Without taking the necessary steps to position ourselves and our beliefs and values as they relate to LGBTQ2S+ individuals, we will be unable to move forward in any sort of meaningful way. In Mette, Nieuwenhuizen and Hvidston's research on teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy, they observe the issue through the lens of Critical Race Theory, and posit that racism, and specifically White privilege, are so entrenched in society that it goes unnoticed (2016). This theory is also referenced by Picower who examined how White teachers maintain and enact dominant ideologies in their teaching and interacting with students and other staff members (2009). This privilege is not only relevant when looking at race, but is also relevant for straight and cisgender individuals when looking at the issues of heteronormativity and cisgender normativity in society, and specifically how they are perpetuated in schools. For LGBTQ2S+ students, "going to school means finding themselves in a school culture that assumes that all students are heterosexual. Most schools make this assumption simply by refusing to acknowledge their LGBTQ citizens. When LGBTQ students are invisible, they are certainly not included or embraced" (Short, 2017, p.61). From my

experience, going into some schools, there is a great deal of education needed for principals and teachers on language, and practices for LGBTQ2S+ belonging and inclusivity. Often I am asked to support a principal as they prepare for conversations they will have with students, staff of families of their students. Their heart is in the right place, but they lack the background knowledge, and language needed to address issues of inequality in a confident way. Our education system is constructed in ways that maintain a status quo and perpetuate privilege for white, English speaking, middle class, straight and cisgender individuals and in large part, this ideology is perpetuated by the individuals within the system who work with students on a daily basis. The system is inherently flawed, but with thorough self-reflection as a starting point, educators can begin to make the necessary changes to ensure our education system meets the needs of all students.

Educators are encouraged to conduct a cultural ‘audit’ of a school to identify the challenges and concerns, not only from the perspective of the teachers but the students, parents, and community members (Hanover Research, 2014). From there, the core objectives can be identified and presented to the staff. Self-reflection on the part of principals and teachers is the first step towards more culturally responsive schools. It needs to start with a principal who genuinely wants to make a more accepting and inclusive school community for LGBTQ2S+ students and families. Authentic leadership is a style of leadership that is essential for leading a school and having staff and students join in because they want to. The word authenticity originates from ancient Greek philosophy, meaning ‘know thyself’ (Chance, 2013). Know thyself, what you stand for, how you want to lead, what your strengths and weaknesses are, and communicate to those around you what they want and need to hear in a way that supports them in the work that they must do. The way that the school leader’s actions are interpreted by the rest

of the school's staff members depends heavily on the relationships that the leader has built, as well as the leader's effectiveness in previous scenarios. If the lines of communication have remained open and the school leader remains transparent about decisions that have to be made, the school staff members will be much more likely to support them in further decision making because they feel that their voices matter in the process. Hargreaves uses the following quote to describe a collegial school culture, "egalitarianism isn't possible, but participative style of community is." (1995, p.34). For cultural competency to have the most impact for student success and achievement, it needs to be incorporated into the practices of each teacher in the school, and therefore their full participation is crucial (Hanover Research, 2014).

True self-reflection is not a simple process. One must understand their own multiple identities which William's addresses in their article as "individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, social and political contexts." (2018, p.49). Mitchell & Rice describe cultural competency through a lens of public service as having an awareness of one's own world view, developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences, gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views, and developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures (2012). Cultural competency does not develop easily or quickly. It can be extremely challenging for someone who has never experienced other ways of knowing to be able to see multiple perspectives and to think of them as equal to their own and as valuable as their own. There is also a deep and long-lasting belief that educators are meant to be strong, not show their weaknesses, and not be vulnerable. This is why it is ever so important that the authentic leader in the school be a role model, and provide opportunities for the rest of the staff to witness the strength of vulnerability and have opportunities to practice what they are learning about.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are one solution to disseminating the work in a particular school with others. They can be used as a way of addressing the systemic issues shared within cultural competency professional learning and spreading the knowledge among more schools in the area. PLCs follow the framework of Organizational Change because they begin with the focus at the individual school level and then allow staff from various schools to come together to address change within the larger context. As Fullan (2006) explains, PLCs bring teachers and school leaders together to improve the learning conditions and results of students in a given school. They focus on learning, are collaborative, are action oriented, focus on results, and are a commitment to continuous improvement. Professional Learning Communities are meant to transform school system cultures (Dufour, 2004). Although PLCs were not initially intended to include students in the professional learning conversations, there is no reason why this cannot take place. In fact, including student voice in PLC may help strengthen the intended change outlined in The Dufour's advanced PLC framework which includes "a collaborative culture stressing learning for all, and an action orientation" (Fullan, 2006, p.6). Including student voice in the learning and decision making can be done more easily at the high school level, but then the information needs to be able to disseminated to junior high and elementary school staff which is why multi-school and grade division PLCs would be a good fit for following through with the learning on the topic of cultural competency.

Imagining Student Involvement in the Professional Learning of Educators

Adolescents can often report alienation at school due to large class sizes, streaming of classes by difficulty and challenge, and large schools where staff are busy with many other activities outside of their regular teaching schedule. Students often describe their high school

experience around the concepts of anonymity and powerlessness (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993). When we consider a marginalized and more vulnerable population of students, such as LGBTQ2S+ students, we can imagine that that lack of sense of belonging, and anonymity would grow. Many LGBTQ2S+ youth do not see themselves reflected in the learning they undertake each day, the people who teach them, and the hallways they walk. They are often keenly aware of this discrepancy and when provided with a safe environment, are able to verbalize the challenges, and ways for improvement. Involving students in the professional development of educators in schools is a valuable process, not only for the students who have an opportunity to be directly involved in improving their learning environment, but the educators who get to hear firsthand how policies, practices, and school culture directly impact the students they are meant to support.

From my experience, it is the students who have opportunities to be involved in their learning, and to create impact beyond their own small worlds that grow the most. When educators create space for students to share their knowledge and experience, when they pause and listen to students, the learning on both sides of the equation is palpable. Biesta uses the term ‘learner’ instead of student. It is rooted in the concept of emancipatory education. There is the assumption that all students can speak, and positions equality at the beginning, not at the end of the educational process. Our word choice matters. When we use the term ‘learner’ we are shifting “the emphasis away from the teachers, curricula, schools and other ‘input factors’ to the activities and identities of those who are supposed to benefit from this” (Biesta, 2010, p.541). “Problems arise when it is claimed that the trajectory from ignorance to knowledge or from inability to ability *necessarily* requires the intervention of an educator on the assumption that the learner is not yet capable to learn by himself.” (Biesta, 2010, p.541). “In his book *The Ignorant*

Schoolmaster Jacques Rancière makes a case that this is possible and, more importantly, that it is only when we engage in teaching *without* explanation that it may be possible to emancipate rather than stultify.” (Biesta, 2010, p.543).

My involvement with the Finland-Alberta Education Partnership (FinAl) began while I was teaching at Jasper Place High School in Edmonton, Alberta. The partnership was created after the identification of Finland and Alberta finishing in first and second place respectively on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scoreboard. Even though both jurisdictions scored the highest among other countries, their style of education is quite unique and there are not as many similarities as one might expect between the system of education in Finland and that of Alberta. It was decided by educational researchers and the ministry of education in Finland that when you are number one and number two in the world it is not the time to sit back and relax, but that much learning could still be done from one another to improve the educational outcomes for students. As the partnership evolved amongst educators, it became important to involve students in the discussion about what change needed to happen next. The question, ‘what makes a great school for all?’ was formulated as the overarching question of the partnership. This question incorporates the concepts of excellence and equity within it.

The first students who were asked to go to Finland from Jasper Place High School were students who had been involved in the creation of the student-led space called the Global Cafe. These were students who were already highly motivated to improve their educational experiences. Probably the one thing that stood out to them the most in Finnish schools that we lacked here in Alberta was a universal hot lunch program for students from kindergarten to grade twelve. The conversations about how this could benefit our students, why it was important, and some of the logistical issues in making it happen took place at round tables with the students,

teachers, and administration from schools and the Alberta Teachers' Association, with everyone's voice equal at the table. From all of the feedback gathered throughout and afterwards, the students involved blew everyone away with their thoughtfulness, insight, and sharing of their personal experiences. Through many discussions and attempts to realize their goal, a new iteration of hot lunches for students was created called "Feed a Rebel" program. Scanning machines were purchased for the school cafeteria so that any student could load money onto their student identification card and access food. Money was raised through various ongoing fundraisers, and student leadership initiatives, and any student or parent could donate a meal to a fellow classmate while loading money onto their own cards through the school website. Students with low food security were identified through school counsellors, success coaches, the principal and assistant principals and had money loaded onto their student identification cards so that they too could access food through the school cafeteria. The key component to this system that the students who planned this required was that students being given money on their card did not stand out as receiving free lunches. There was no different line up in the cafeteria, no special punch card that made the experience of eating lunch any different than other students. "Giving voice to children is not simply or only about letting children speak; it is about exploring the unique contributions to our understanding of and theorizing about the social world that children's perspectives can provide." (Mitra, 2004, p.652). We as educators learned from these students the importance of not letting shame become part of the equation for the students accessing the free meals. It was one of the components they were adamant about.

The Finland-Alberta Education Project continued for several years and I took students from Edmonton to Finland to tour schools, learn from the students, teachers, and administrators there, and host valuable conversations about what makes a great school for all. Seeing youth at

the table with adults, having deep conversations and diving into topics such as the purpose of education, or reimagining student assessments, will always be the image that comes to mind when I imagine larger scale professional learning where LGBTQ2S+ students are involved in the discussions with school staff about how to make schools more inclusive, welcoming, and structured to meet their unique needs. Jacques Rancière has the belief that ‘there is no hierarchy of *intellectual capacity*’ but only ‘inequality in the *manifestations* of intelligence’ (Biesta, 2010, p.544). It is that hierarchy that often silences the voices of those with lived experiences that are the topic of discussion. Not only can the educators involved in this professional learning benefit, but the students who take part will be changed for the better. Mitra suggests that the experiences that youth have when their voice is included in educational decision making can help meet developmental needs, as well as being a very fulfilling experience. (Mitra, 2004). ‘The ignorant person will learn by himself what the master doesn’t know if the master believes he can and obliges him to realize his capacity’ (Rancière, 1991, p.15). The students involved in the FinAl partnership grew exponentially in their confidence and their academic success was impacted positively. One student I took to Finland and who hosted a Finnish student visiting Edmonton used the experience as their basis for the International Baccalaureate extended essay. Another student who lives on a First Nations reserve nearby solidified her career pathway while in Finland, deciding to study Political Sciences and become politically active in her band’s affairs. Students took on other projects in the school, such as hosting Alternative Learning Opportunity (ALO) sessions for their peers on designated days, or joining the Global Cafe to help with social justice related events.

Students come to school with identities and experiences that are valid and must be valued as they are the subject of education. Mitra explains that the term ‘Student Voice’ has been

gaining traction within literature as a way that students can be actively involved in school decision-making that directly impacts them and their peers' lives. "...student voice activities can create meaningful experiences for youth that help to meet fundamental developmental needs especially for students who otherwise do not find meaning in their school experiences." (Mitra, 2004, p.654). The development needs that Mitra speaks of are agency, belonging, and competence (2004). For students to feel connected to school and have their understanding and lived experience valued and acknowledged as important, are key to creating meaningful change that matters for students.

Discussion

Part of leading a learning environment is accepting that change is a constant. Change is never an easy endeavour, especially when the change needed is systemic. Revisioning a system where the needs of marginalized students are addressed and that barriers to safe and equitable education are removed is a large undertaking in a system that has remained largely unchanged over its lifespan. The term cultural competency is gaining momentum within the education system as one way of addressing some of the systemic barriers that racial and cultural minority students face in schools. Using a process and practice such as Professional Learning Communities is a good fit for having professional learning outcomes shared across schools and being able to give more of an audience for the voices of marginalized students participating and sharing their own experiences.

I argue that it is also beneficial and aligned to include in these conversations and professional learning opportunities, the inequalities faced by sexual and gender minority students in schools. It is counterintuitive to address the barriers faced by one group, and not look at how

the educational system, and traditional practices of educators perpetuate the inequality of all minority students that are not white, able-bodied, straight, cisgender, and middle or upper class. It is the role of the educational leader to lead a school staff through professional learning that addresses and highlights these inequalities in a meaningful way. Addressing our own biases as educators, as human beings living in our society, is not an easy feat, yet it is the most important aspect of improving our own cultural competency. Incorporating the voices of youth with lived experience of these inequalities into the professional learning for educators is one way to begin to address the realities of being a student in our school system, and learning a perspective different from our own.

Youth find meaning in having their voices heard, and being part of the conversation with people who help to shape their lives. The concept of student voice is gaining momentum in the education system and I have had many opportunities to witness the purpose it gives students, and how it helps to improve their sense of belonging and connection they have to their school. It takes some time to ensure that educators can create and maintain the safe space in order for youth to speak up and share their experiences, but when that happens, it is a very powerful experience for everyone involved, and an experience that provides both adults and youth with rich learning.

It is possible for educators and students to work together to address the systemic barriers that continue to marginalize groups of youth in schools, and improve the educational experience for all students. The question posed to students, teachers, and school administrators in the FinAl partnership, ‘What makes a great school for all?’ provided awareness and possible solutions to many of the aspects of school that leave students without a sense of belonging, or the acknowledgement and respect they deserve. The experiences of learning alongside students,

hearing their perspectives, as well as having meaningful discussion where students were engaged in understanding the complexities of the education system from the perspective of teachers and administrators was an invaluable experience for everyone involved. The experience made me appreciate what was possible and most meaningful in professional learning scenarios.

References

- Alberta Education. (2018). *Leadership Quality Standard*.
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3739621/standardsdoc-lqs-fa-web-2018-01-17.pdf>
- Biesta, G. (2010). Learner, Student, Speaker: Why it matters how we call those we teach. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 42(5), 540-552.
- Bourdieu, P. (1983). The Forms of capital. In A. H. Halsley, Lauder, Hugh, Brown, Phillip and A. S. Wells, (eds.). *Education: culture, economy and society* (1997, 46-58). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chance, P. (2013). *Introduction to educational leadership & organizational behaviour: Theory into practice*. Routledge; New York.
- Dufour, R. (2004). What is a “Professional Learning Community?” *Schools as Learning Communities*, 61:8, 6-11.
- Evans, R. (1996). *The human side of school change: Reform, resistance, and the real life problems of innovation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fontaine, J. H. (1997). The sound of silence: Public school response to the needs of gay and lesbian youth. In M. B. Harris (ed.), *School experiences of gay and lesbian youth: The invisible minority* (pp. 101-109). New York: Haworth Press.
- Friend, R. A. (1993). Choices, not closets: Heterosexism and homophobia in schools. In L. Weis & M. Fine (eds.), *Beyond silenced voices: Class, race, and gender in U.S. schools* (pp. 209-235). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Fullan, M. (2006, November). *Change theory: A Force for school improvement*. The Centre for Strategic Education Seminar Series, Victoria Australia. Paper No. 157.
- Giancarlo Corsi (2020) ‘Education has no end’: Reconciling past and future through reforms in the education system, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52:6, 688-697.
- Hanover Research. (2014). Strategies for building cultural competency.
www.hanoverresearch.com
- Hargreaves, D. (1995) School culture, school effectiveness and school improvement, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 6:1, 23-46.
- Mette, I., Nieuwenhuizen, L. & Hvidston, D. (2016). Teachers’ perceptions of culturally

- responsive pedagogy and the impact on leadership preparation: Lessons for future reform efforts. *NCPEA International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 11(1), 221-243.
- Mitra, D. (2004). The significance of students: Can increasing “Student Voice” in schools lead to gains in youth development? *Teachers College Record*, 106(4), 651-688.
- Mitra, D. & Gross, S. (2009). Increasing Student Voice in High School Reform: Building Partnerships, Improving Outcomes. *Educational Management Administration Leadership*, 37(4), 522-543.
- National Association of Elementary School Principals (2017). *The Principal’s guide to building culturally responsive schools*. www.naesp.org
- Payne, E. & Smith, M. (2018). Refusing relevance: School administrator resistance to offering professional development addressing LGBTQ issues in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 54(2), 183-215.
- Picower, B. (2009). The unexamined Whiteness of teaching: How White teachers maintain and enact dominant ideologies. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 12(2), 197-215.
- Ranciere, J. (1991). *The ignorant schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Reynolds, V. (2011). Resisting Burnout with Justice-Doing. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, Vol.4, 27-45.
- Rice, M. & Mathews, A. (2012). A New Kind of Public Service Professional Possessing Cultural Competency Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills. In J. Shafritz, J. Ott & Y. Jang (Eds). *Classics of Organizational Theory* (pp.429-438). Boston. MA: Cengage Learning.
- Savage, T & Harley, D. (2009). A place at the blackboard: LGBTIQ. *Multicultural Education*. Summer 2009, 2-9.
- Short, D. (2017). *Am I safe here?: LGBTQ teens and bullying in schools*. Vancouver: On Point Press.
- Tigani, L., Laing, T., Villavicencio, A., & New York University, R. A. for N.Y.C.S. (2017). Learning out loud: Elevating student voices in education. In *Research Alliance for New York City Schools* (pp.116-128). Research Alliance for New York City Schools.
- Williams, S. (2018). Developing the capacity of culturally competent leaders to redress inequitable outcomes: Increasing opportunities for historically marginalized students. *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, 8(1), 48-58.



CAPPING PROJECT SIGNATURE FORM

Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Alberta
July 2019

Student Name **Kerry L. Maguire**

Student ID **384123**

Instructor Name **Larry W. Prochner**

Capping Exercise Project Title **Promoting the Inclusion of LGBTIQ2S+ Cultural
Competency Outcomes in School Professional Learning:
Through the Eyes of Youth**

Term **Fall** **20**

The undersigned certifies that the student named has completed the requirements of EDPS 900 (capping exercise). The student thus receives credit for this course, which is completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

**Larry
Prochner** Digitally signed by
Larry Prochner
Date: 2020.12.17
13:19:21 -07'00'

Instructor Signature