

Comfort and emotional experience: Reimagining LGBTIQ inclusive pedagogies with preservice teachers

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In recent years, there has been a welcomed reimagining of initial teacher education programs to include courses about LGBTIQ-inclusive practices and working with students of diverse sexual and gender identities. However, there still appears to be limitations and challenges that prevent preservice teachers (PSTs) from freely adopting these inclusive practices. The current study aims to illuminate some of these challenges by examining PSTs' feelings of comfort and their emotional experience as they prepare to work in classrooms with LGBTIQ students.

As a point of difference to the quantitative literature examining PSTs' feelings of comfort when working with LGBTIQ students, we draw on Vygotsky's cultural-historical concept of *perezhivanie*. This concept focuses on the emotional experience of an individual's affective relations and their developing understanding, that is situated within the material and social conditions of the environment. As a theoretical lens, *perezhivanie* positions the person's relation with their environment as dynamic and unique, and within a space that is constantly shifting where the individual changes the environment, and the environment changes the individual.

After ethical approval was granted from a university ethics committee, PSTs enrolled in a Master of Teaching degree were surveyed, and data were combined with a focus group (total participants $n=42$). The qualitative data from the survey and focus group were analysed using a directed content analysis technique and two main findings indicated that PSTs' perceptions of comfort and perceived emotional experience were interrelated.

First, PSTs' past experiences with LGBTIQ people in familial, social and work settings influenced their understanding of LGBTIQ content and may have contributed to transforming their emerging pedagogy. Whereas limited personal interactions with LGBTIQ people restricted some of the PSTs' abilities to discuss feelings of comfort. Second, the PSTs were confronted by systemic tensions when employing gender-inclusive language, working within religious schools and having the appropriate background knowledge about LGBTIQ students. These tensions contributed to challenging emotional experiences when PSTs were unable to alleviate these issues.

It is argued that the concept of comfort provides an initial starting point, but *perezhivanie* is a powerful lens to support a broader understanding of the systemic institutional structures which may constrain PSTs when working with LGBTIQ students. Furthermore, the novel application of *perezhivanie* in the space of LGBTIQ-inclusion affords a unique opportunity to further reimagine LGBTIQ-focused educational research and initial teacher education.