

**EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND QUEER EDUCATORS:  
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS OF INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY**

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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead (1901–1978) Anthropologist and Women’s Rights Activist  
(Institute for Intercultural Studies, 2009)

What can one education administrator or policy-maker do about homophobia or transphobia directed toward educators in scholastic settings? As editors of this special collection of the *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, we have opened this introductory essay with the words of Margaret Mead in order to underscore an important message contained in all of the essays of this collection: education administrators and policy makers are paramount to creating learning environments that are respectful of sexual and gender diversity for all staff and students. This holds true for a variety of educational settings ranging from publicly-funded Catholic and non-Catholic kindergarten to Grade 12 schools (K–12) to higher learning settings such as colleges, universities, transnational teaching abroad programs, and adult and community education spaces.

Educational policy makers write a series of statements that describe, prescribe, or proscribe a course of action on any given issue in an educational setting. These educational policies are developed at multiple levels of an educational organization, including at the local

level involving educational administrators. Educational administrators—such as principals, lead teachers, or department heads in the K–12 environment; department chairs, deans, and senior leaders in higher learning settings; and executive directors and educational program leaders of adult and community education centres—ensure that the educational policies are followed, and that decisions are made in accordance with various levels of policy documentation. Educational leaders are responsible for the educational policy and the administrative decisions that directly affect the work conditions and work culture of teachers. Teachers who are vulnerable because of their minority position, such as those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) are especially reliant on educational leaders to develop and implement educational policies and initiatives that are not only respectful of gender and sexual diversity among the teaching staff, but that also acknowledge the tremendous resource that LGBTQ educators bring to the educational setting.

Fortunately, for those LGBTQ educators teaching in Canada, many educational policy developers and administrators have designed provincial policies that align with Canada’s preeminent policy document, the federal Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter) (1982), specifically Section 15, known as the equality rights provision. The equality rights part of Section 15 reads:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (1982, p.1)

In 1995 sexual orientation was “read in” to the Charter as a prohibited ground of discrimination, and came to be understood as analogous to the types of discrimination originally listed in Section 15, such as age or race (Hurley, 2005). In addition to this development, most provincial and territorial governments now contain at least “gender,” “sex,” or “gender identity” in their

provincial human rights codes, which are meant to include transgender individuals (TESAonline, 2015). With this policy inclusion in mind, many Canadian forward-thinking educational policy makers began to design educational policy that respects diversity, equity, and human rights and that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Much of this protection was initially directed towards LGBTQ students in school settings and only later started to address discrimination against LGBTQ educators. As the essays in this collection reveal, it is one matter to develop progressive policy, and it is another matter entirely to extend it to all affected parties and to ensure it is implemented in practice. Despite the existence of the Charter and provincial human rights legislation, LGBTQ educators in Canada are still subjected to discrimination and oppression on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in Canadian educational institutions. Educational policy makers and administrators are perfectly positioned in important leadership roles that enable them to reverse these discriminatory practices.

Other countries around the world have also passed national laws that provide protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation: for example, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, and Sweden. But there are still many nations that outlaw gender and sexual diversity and expression (recent tallies put the number at 79, making it too long to list here) and eight countries that institute the death penalty for same-sex intimacy: three examples are Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association, 2015). Looking at this brief overview, it might be tempting to cast the global situation for gender and sexually diverse individuals as a binary, such as *rich world = tolerance* and *poor world = intolerance*, but it is important to point out that Saudi Arabia is among the richest nations in the

world and it implements the death penalty for homosexuality while Ecuador, a middle-income developing country, outlaws discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. It is also important to keep in mind that some of the most repressive laws impacting LGBTQ people originate in the first world with the colonizing project of the British Empire (Baird, 2007). For those administrators in Canada who may believe that they are far removed from such worldly affairs, we would like to point out that Canadian classrooms are increasingly diverse, and that students and educators may originate from and travel to such countries where persecution exists. There are indeed implications for educational systems and operations when factoring transnational mobility. As the authors in this special collection emphasize, equality for LGBTQ people has not been achieved and this point is especially poignant, complex, and impactful for LGBTQ educators seeking employment in international settings: for example, with non-governmental organizations, or with institutions of higher learning such as universities that are increasingly establishing off-shore campuses, or in international K–12 schools that are teaching Canadian curriculum in far-away nations with vastly different laws and human rights protections.

Such rapid changes in transnational mobility that impact everyone, including LGBTQ educators, underscore why this special collection is needed now. This special collection breaks ground on three fronts. First, the majority of the content is about queer educators in a Canadian context, which makes this the first collection of its kind in social science literature. This collection builds upon a pioneer study by critical pedagogue Didi Khayatt (1992) whose book *Lesbian Teachers: An Invisible Presence* offered an original institutional ethnography from the standpoint of lesbian teachers in the Canadian context of the early to middle 1980s, and has been highly regarded as a significant body of work that helped start the conversation on the lives of queer educators. Now, 23 years later, we are pleased to expand the work of Khayatt to include

other sexual orientations and gender identities, and to look at these in relation with race, class, religion, and other identity markers within the LGBTQ spectrum. The second unique feature is that there are multiple levels of education represented in this collection. So often educational scholarship operates in silos, where K–12 education is separated from adult and community education, which (although to a lesser degree) sometimes stands alone from higher education. Broadening the topic of queer educators to include sub-fields in education (K–12, adult, postsecondary) is tremendously beneficial to readers who may wish to highlight similarities and differences amongst the articles, and discover potential new directions that could guide educational administrators, policy-makers, and educators. As papers in this collection illustrate, this approach has revealed exclusionary tendencies in practice (diversity is absent or too vague), interactions (staff members and leaders being dismissive or asking queer educators to not come out at work or in the classroom), curricula (heteronormative content), and so forth. The third feature that makes this collection unique is that it globalizes the question of queer educators by problematizing the internationalization strategies of many post-secondary institutions, shedding light on the effects of an increasingly mobile work force on sexual and gender diverse educators, and extending beyond the borders of Canada into a global discourse of resistance to heterosexist oppression. As Martin Luther King Jr. says, “We may have all come on different ships, but we’re in the same boat now” (Intercultural Harmony Project, n.d.). Queer educators in Canada, regardless of their backgrounds, have much to share with and learn from queer educators in other parts of the world.

This collection represents a plethora of emergent perspectives on queer educators. We begin this collection starting in Canada with **Tonya Callaghan’s** empirical study, which illustrates the current struggles facing queer educators in Catholic schools in Alberta and

Ontario. **Jan Buterman** uses life narrative as a transgender teacher in Alberta to demonstrate the “Meantime” that targets gender variance. Next, **Kaela Jubas** points out how internationalization strategies have implications for queer educators working at post-secondary institutions, and uses the University of Calgary as an example. This collection continues with the transnational work of **Robert Mizzi**, which points out the difficulties for gay men teaching internationally in adult education settings and compares the experiences of gay male expatriates working in Kosovo with gay male immigrants working in Toronto. This collection then takes another international turn in order to learn of some of the emergent issues facing queer educators in other countries and as a means to motivate further Canadian scholarship. **Mitsunori Misawa** brings attention to gay male professors of colour in the United States, and illustrates how both racism and homophobia intersect in the workplace despite the presence of equity policies. Last, we draw attention to recent developments in Australia, where **Tania Ferfolja** and **Efty Stavrou** present research from a national survey of lesbian and gay male K–12 teachers and their experiences creating a queer-positive culture and climate. As editors, we were thrilled to receive each of these papers as they advance the topic of queer educators and break new ground for further theory and research. We recognize that this collection gauges the current climate for queer educators in different work settings and realize that more work is to be done if we are to actually develop pluralistic and inclusive educational environments in Canada and elsewhere.

This collection could not have been created without assistance. In addition to undergoing initial and final editorial reviews by the two co-editors of this collection—Tonya Callaghan of the University of Calgary and Robert Mizzi of the University of Manitoba—every paper in this collection went through a double blind peer review process with two reviewers who are established and emerging scholars in the field of queer studies in education. Thanks to our

esteemed reviewers for jumping on board so readily to bring this themed issue into existence.

These reviewers are as follows: Gerald Walton, Lakehead University; Will Letts, Charles Sturt University; Chloe Brushwood-Rose, York University; Matthew Eichler, Texas State University–San Marcos; John Egan, University of Auckland; Karleen Pendleton Jimenez, Trent University; Bob Hill, Activist-Scholar; Spy Denommé-Welch, Brock University; Don Cochrane, University of Saskatchewan; Melissa White, University of New Brunswick; and Jay Garvey, University of Alabama–Tuscaloosa. We would also like to offer many thanks to our managing editor of the themed issue, Jay Jimenez, University of Manitoba, for all his assistance stewarding the different papers. Thanks to CJEAP’s regular editors Jon Young and Gordon Marce, University of Manitoba, for their ongoing encouragement and support for this special themed issue to be published with CJEAP, where it has a chance to reach those educational administrators and policy-makers who are best positioned to effect change for sexual and gender diverse students and staff in all manner of educational institutions.

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