

Frontier of Gender Studies – ジェンダー学の最前線

International symposium at Kanazawa University, Japan

October 1 – October 2, 2019

Sexual Diversity in German Schoolbooks

Ami Kobayashi, lecturer & research associate at Heinrich Heine University

Abstract

Research shows that in general, Germans accept the topic of sexual diversity in school curricula, especially when it is linked with anti-discrimination. However, not much research has been conducted which analyses sexual and gender diversity in school textbooks. The fact that each German federal state has its own state constitution, school law, teaching plan and individual schoolbook authorization process, makes it difficult to draw an overview of this topic. Thus, in my paper I focus on (biology) textbooks of the State of Rheinland-Pfalz and examine how the topic of sexual diversity is integrated into biology textbooks. The School Law of Rheinland-Pfalz stipulates that schools should support children irrespective of their sexuality and work against any discrimination.

While some biology textbooks just shortly explain terms like “homosexuality” and “sexual orientation”, others refer to social stigma of sexual minorities and convey the message that all sexualities should be respected. Some textbooks even refer to pressures that sexual minorities face at school, and encourage students to discuss how friends and families can support them and be inclusive.

The analysis of the school books shows that in accordance with the increased acceptance of sexual minorities, school textbooks have also been changed. Although there are differences between the federal states and between schoolbooks, there are topics related to gender equality and sexuality in many but not all biology textbooks. On the other hand, many textbooks (in other subjects) are still very heteronormative and need to be improved. Moreover, it should be mentioned that the biology textbooks I analyzed only refer to homo- and bisexuality, and other sexual minorities like intersex and transgender are completely ignored, although some research shows that trans*people face more discrimination than lesbians or gays.