TROUBLING COMPULSORY HETEROSEXUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

DATE  26 September 2016
TIME  16:00 – 18:00
VENUE  D Lab Base K02
       Auckland Park Kingsway Campus
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For this seminar, I draw on classroom observations and interviews South African schools on the teaching of gender and sexuality diversity. For the most part, the findings show that teachers position LGBT learners into visible and invisible groupings, both as a school problem. I argue that there is an ambivalent inflection in the way LGBT youth are positioned within schools, and this positioning can be understood as an expression of a deeper ambivalence between visibility and invisibility both, which marginalize non-normative sexuality. To develop this argument, I have organized my presentation in two parts.

The first presents a discussion of the teachers’ construction of LGBT youth as invisible by denying their existence at school. The second expounds the supra-visibility of sexual minorities but as victims of bullying and harassment and as ‘loud and over the top.’ Both positions visibility and invisibility spur on the dominance of heterosexuality and simultaneously downplay the need for educational reform. I conclude the paper with implications for the need for the teaching of gender and sexuality diversity in South African schools.

Dennis Francis is a former dean of Education and currently a Professor of Sociology at Stellenbosch University. He has published extensively in the area of gender and sexuality diversity and schooling. Dennis is the author of Troubling the Teaching and Learning of Gender and Sexuality Diversity in South African Education.