

Initial Teacher Education and Inclusion: Progress, Setbacks, and Challenges 30 Years after the Salamanca Statement

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Gender Mainstreaming and LGBTIQ+ Inclusion in Elementary Teacher Education Programs in Chile: Insights from Two Case Studies

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Abstract: Globally, gender mainstreaming and LGBTIQ+ inclusion remain marginal concerns in teacher education. This study investigates how these issues are discursively constructed and implemented within the elementary teacher education programs of two Chilean universities—one public and one private—in the wake of the 2018 feminist movement and recent constitutional debates. Through documentary analysis, focus groups with preservice teachers, and photo-elicitation interviews with faculty and gender office directors, the case studies examine institutional, curricular, and pedagogical discourses. A reflexive thematic analysis, informed by post-structural feminist and queer theories, reveals two distinct institutional approaches: the public university adopts a “diagnosis-solution model,” framing gender and sexuality diversity as socio-educational variables affecting learning. In contrast, the private university employs a

“human rights-based approach” grounded in social justice advocacy. Despite curricular constraints and neoliberal pressures, teacher educators in both contexts demonstrated a commitment to non-sexist and anti-homophobic/transphobic education, employing pedagogies of embodied learning, evidence-based teaching, and human rights advocacy to foster personal transformation among future educators. The findings underscore the pivotal yet precarious role of feminist and queer faculty in driving inclusion and highlight the need to move beyond tokenistic or depoliticized approaches to challenge dominant narratives of gender and sexuality in teacher education.

Keywords: gender mainstreaming; LGBTIQ+ inclusion; teacher education; feminist pedagogy; queer pedagogy

Transversalización de género e inclusión LGBTIQ+ en programas de formación docente de educación básica en Chile: Aportes desde dos estudios de caso

Resumen: A nivel global, la transversalización de género y la inclusión de personas LGBTIQ+ siguen siendo preocupaciones marginales en la formación docente. Este estudio investiga cómo estas problemáticas se construyen discursivamente e implementan en los programas de formación docente de educación básica de dos universidades chilenas —una pública y una privada— a la luz del movimiento feminista de 2018 y de los recientes debates constitucionales. A través de un análisis documental, grupos focales con docentes en formación y entrevistas con foto-elicitación a académicos y directoras de las oficinas de género, los estudios de caso examinan discursos institucionales, curriculares y pedagógicos. El análisis temático reflexivo, informado por teorías feministas postestructuralistas y queer, revela dos enfoques institucionales diferentes: la universidad pública adopta un “modelo de diagnóstico-solución”, enmarcando el género y la diversidad sexo-genérica como variables socioeducativas que afectan el aprendizaje; mientras que la universidad privada emplea un “enfoque basado en derechos humanos” fundamentado en la defensa de la justicia social. A pesar de las restricciones curriculares y de las presiones neoliberales, las docentes formadoras en ambos contextos demuestran un compromiso con una educación no sexista y anti-homofóbica/transfóbica, utilizando pedagogías de aprendizaje encarnado, enseñanza basada en evidencias y defensa de los derechos humanos para promover transformaciones personales en futuros docentes. Los hallazgos subrayan el papel crucial, aunque precario, del profesorado feminista y queer en impulsar la inclusión, y destacan la necesidad de superar enfoques tokenistas o despolitizados para desafiar los relatos dominantes sobre género y sexualidad en la formación docente.

Palabras-clave: transversalización de género; inclusión LGBTIQ+; formación inicial docente; pedagogía feminista; pedagogía queer

Transversalização de gênero e inclusão LGBTIQ+ em programas de formação de professores de educação básica no Chile: Contribuições a partir de dois estudos de caso

Resumo: Em nível global, a transversalização de gênero e a inclusão de pessoas LGBTIQ+ continuam sendo preocupações marginais na formação docente. Este estudo investiga como essas problemáticas são discursivamente construídas e implementadas nos programas de formação de professores de educação básica de duas universidades chilenas — uma pública e uma privada — à luz do movimento feminista de 2018 e dos recentes debates constitucionais. Por meio de análise documental, grupos focais com professores em formação e entrevistas com foto-eliciação com docentes e diretoras de escritórios de gênero, os estudos de caso

examinam discursos institucionais, curriculares e pedagógicos. A análise temática reflexiva, informada por teorias feministas pós-estruturalistas e queer, revela duas abordagens institucionais distintas: a universidade pública adota um “modelo diagnóstico-solução”, enquadrando o gênero e a diversidade sexo-genérica como variáveis socioeducativas que afetam a aprendizagem; enquanto a universidade privada emprega uma “abordagem baseada em direitos humanos”, fundamentada na defesa da justiça social. Apesar das restrições curriculares e das pressões neoliberais, as formadoras de professores em ambos os contextos demonstram um compromisso com uma educação não sexista e anti-homofóbica/transfóbica, utilizando pedagogias de aprendizagem incorporada, ensino baseado em evidências e defesa dos direitos humanos para promover transformações pessoais nos futuros docentes. Os achados ressaltam o papel crucial, ainda que precário, do professorado feminista e queer na promoção da inclusão, e destacam a necessidade de superar abordagens tokenistas ou despolitizadas para desafiar os relatos dominantes sobre gênero e sexualidade na formação docente.

Palavras-chave: transversalização de gênero; inclusão LGBTIQ+; formação inicial docente; pedagogia feminista; pedagogia queer

Gender Mainstreaming and LGBTIQ+ Inclusion in Elementary Teacher Education Programs in Chile: Insights from Two Case Studies

Feminism and queer activism have long challenged conventional norms of gender and sexuality in society and education, “driven by a vision of ‘a world which is not’ [yet]” (Manicom, 1992, p. 365). These transformative movements have significantly influenced educational research, policymaking, teaching practices, and curriculum development (Tadeu da Silva, 1999; Tierney & Dilley, 1998), although facing strong resistance and provoking moral panics (Robinson, 2008; Weiner, 2000). In recent years, fourth-wave feminist movements, particularly led by high school and college students, have emerged across Latin America (e.g., Mingo, 2019; Tomasini, 2022; Troncoso et al., 2019). In Chile, the feminist protests of 2018 confronted sexual harassment and institutionalized sexism and heteronormativity in higher education institutions (Troncoso et al., 2019). While not new in Chilean policy, *gender mainstreaming* became a central discourse in higher education following this movement, often conflating feminist perspectives and LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

Grounded in poststructural perspectives, these case studies explore how institutional, curricular, and pedagogical discourses shape and limit the implementation of gender mainstreaming (GM) and gender and sexual diversity (GSD) in teacher education. Poststructural and queer perspectives challenge the essentialist views on identity and difference, offering a critical framework for understanding (or *complicating*) the institutional projects regarding gender(s), sexuality(ies), and diversity during neoliberal and neoconservative times. For instance, neoliberal rationality may assimilate feminist and queer perspectives into the ‘language of diversity’ (Ahmed, 2012; Matus & Infante, 2011; Zabala-Eisshofer, 2025) or ‘well-intentioned’ liberal LGBTIQ+ inclusion policies (Leonardi & Moses, 2021), while global anti-gender ideology movements are aggressively resisting to gender mainstreaming and LGBTIQ+ inclusion (Morán Faúndes, 2022).

The next section presents a brief literature review of diversity in teacher education, followed by an examination of GM and GSD in teacher education, and then the Chilean context concerning these challenges.

Preparing Teachers to Deal with Diversity

In many developed countries, knowledge society and neoliberal economics have become dominant paradigms shaping education policy, research, and practice, particularly in the field of teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015, p. 9). Within this broader context, the neoliberal knowledge paradigm emphasizes educational quality, teacher professionalism, and performance-based evaluation as key indicators of success (Goodwin, 2012). In the case of Chile, these neoliberal logics in higher education are manifest in the naturalization of knowledge as capital, education as a commodity, and individuals and families as primary stakeholders (Simbürger & Donoso, 2020).

In response to global demographic changes and the increasing enrolment in regular schools of students from immigrant, Indigenous, and other marginalized communities, teacher education in countries such as the USA and Chile began incorporating a diversity and inclusion approach (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matus & Infante, 2011). This shift aimed to prepare teachers to deal with the *differences* in a multicultural world (Matus & Infante, 2011, p. 295, original emphasis). However, while this approach may expand teachers' awareness of differences, it often remains uncritical of the historical and (bio)political processes through which these differences have been constructed and institutionalized (Foucault, 1978; Matus & Infante, 2011). Zabala-Eisshofer (2025) analyzed the required diversity course descriptions at 80 public universities in the United States and found that the most prevalent rationale was preparing students to live in a global or pluralistic society (noted in 56 institutions). In contrast, only five universities emphasized the importance of developing awareness of systems of power and social justice.

One of the critical responses to the increasing multiculturalism of school classrooms, along with socioeconomic, racial, and gender inequalities, is the academic and pedagogical interest in social justice in teacher education. However, the growth of teacher education programs in the USA that identify as *social justice-oriented* has been criticized for their ambiguous and undertheorized conceptions of social justice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, neither social justice-oriented nor multicultural teacher education programs necessarily integrate gender mainstreaming or gender and sexual diversity in a substantive way (Gorski et al., 2013; Resa Ocio, 2023). Evidence from the United States and New Zealand suggests that teacher education programs often prioritize multiculturalism, ethnicity, and special educational needs, while issues related to gender and sexual diversity receive comparatively less attention or are absent (Carpenter & Lee, 2010; Gorski et al., 2013; Jennings & Sherwin, 2008).

Gender Mainstreaming and Queering Teacher Education

In recent years, universities around the globe have adopted gender mainstreaming policies, incorporating gender studies into curricula, promoting gender parity among faculty, and implementing protocols to address sexual and gender-based harassment (Buquet, 2011; Jackson & Muñoz-García, 2019). In countries such as Spain, gender mainstreaming initiatives in teacher education seek to prepare teachers to confront sexism and gender-based violence in schools (Rausell & Talavera, 2017). However, an analysis of syllabi in Spanish elementary teacher education programs reveals a significant implementation gap despite robust national policies mandating gender equality (Resa Ocio, 2023). Resa Ocio (2023) found a lack of institutional coherence, where universities may promote egalitarian policies yet fail to integrate gender mainstreaming into the core curriculum of teacher education. A vast majority of programs lack specific courses on gender equality, and when present, these are predominantly designed and taught by women faculty.

Furthermore, the syllabi in Spanish elementary teacher education programs exhibit a pervasive use of non-inclusive language and a significant gender bias in bibliographical references, underscoring a systemic failure to translate policy into practice (Resa Ocio, 2023). International

literature shows that one of the most significant obstacles identified in universities is the insufficient preparation of teaching staff in gender equality, and as a result, many faculty members do not recognize this issue as relevant. They are therefore unwilling to commit the time and effort required for large-scale initiatives such as curriculum reform (Cordero-Aliaga & Romero-López, 2025). Moreover, these gender mainstreaming efforts often equate gender with women's perspectives, overlooking broader conversations related to masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), trans* and non-binary identities (Keenan, 2022), and interlocking forms of oppression, such as heterosexism and colonialism (hooks, 1994).

Besides gender mainstreaming, gender and sexual diversity teacher education (GSDTE) initiatives (Airton & Koecher, 2019; Leonardi & Staley, 2019) have sought to prepare future teachers to confront homophobia, transphobia, and cis-heteronormativity in schools, adopting queer, feminist, and social justice theoretical frameworks. The GSDTE research and practice are concentrated in the United States and Canada. Despite regional differences, these countries have certain legal protections, inclusive policies, and available educational resources related to LGBTIQ+ people (Jones, 2019). However, educational policy on protecting LGBTIQ+ students' rights is particularly vulnerable and volatile with the advance of neoconservative movements and far-right governments (Jones, 2019; Morán Faúndes, 2022).

Airton & Koecher's (2019) review found that GSDTE scholarship often exists in silo, failing to connect with broader teacher education literature, such as curricular and pedagogical studies. Additionally, most of the research problems are framed on LGBTIQ+ youth victimization data, and the field is dominated by paradigms of 'tolerance' and 'acceptance' of specific and static LGBTQ+ identities. As noted by Britzman (1995), so-called 'pedagogies of tolerance' and the dissemination of 'correct information' about the Other tend to reproduce a binary relation between 'tolerant' and 'tolerated,' reinforcing the very distinction between normal-abnormal that such pedagogies aim to dismantle. Airton and Koecher (2019) also observed that GSDTE is frequently sustained by the personal initiative of a small group of dedicated teacher educators—often queer and/or women—rather than through systematic integration into teacher education curricula. Likewise, Resa Ocio (2023) points out that gender-related courses in teacher education are disproportionately taught by women faculty, often in isolation.

As queer theorists argue, without adequate preparation, preservice and practicing teachers may—either actively or unintentionally—reinforce cis-heteronormativity and other oppressive systems in education (Kumashiro, 2000). Teacher educators and scholars drawing on queer theory (e.g., Staley & Leonardi, 2019; Staley & Blackburn, 2023) argue that teacher education should go beyond mere inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people by actively challenging normative assumptions about gender and sexuality, promoting critical self-reflection, and addressing privilege through an intersectional approach. This embodied work is often emotionally unsettling, yet essential for developing socially just pedagogical practices.

Chilean Teacher Education, Gender Mainstreaming and LGBTIQ+ Inclusion

Chilean teacher education is university-based, with public and private institutions playing a significant role in preparing future teachers. However, in Chile, the label *public* is no longer synonymous with a state, tuition-free university (Simbürger & Donoso, 2020), after the neoliberal reforms implemented during the military-civic dictatorship. In Chilean school education, the New Public Management (NPM) model was introduced to provide curricular support and implement quality assurance policies through an extensive accountability system centered on standardized test scores (Falabella, 2015). Under this model, the central government seeks to manage and mitigate the inequities generated by the deregulated school market established in the 1980s while keeping intact

the underlying market logic that governs school funding. Additionally, the Chilean Constitution, established during the dictatorship, granted parents the preferential right to educate their children and choose their children's school, grounded on the principle of freedom of education. These specific rights have benefited conservative groups in opposing educational policies and initiatives related to gender and sexuality.

Simbürger and Donoso (2020) identified, between two higher education policy reports (1991 and 2008), several discursive shifts, including the framing of knowledge as capital, education as a commodity, the repositioning of individuals and families as key stakeholders, and the construction of students and academics as users, emphasizing quality, autonomy, and system self-regulation. Within this performance-driven academic landscape, the figure of the *taxi-professor*—an hourly-paid, precariously employed academic—now constitutes the majority of teaching staff in Chilean universities, particularly within the private sector (Simbürger & Neary, 2016).

Over the years, educational reforms have aimed to improve teacher education quality and consistency across institutions, given their massification and deregulation. The *Teacher Professional Development System* (Chile, 2016) introduced more rigorous standards in teacher education, mandating that only accredited universities can confer teaching degrees (Castillo-Paredes et al., 2022).

Recent social democratic governments, particularly Michelle Bachelet's second administration (2014–2018), have advanced in gender mainstreaming policies in education and the protection of LGBTIQ+ students. Key initiatives include the School Inclusion Law (Chile, 2015), the Gender Action Plan (MINEDUC, 2015), the Trans Children's Rights in Education Act (Chile, 2021), and the Pedagogical Standards for Elementary Teacher Education (CPEIP, 2022), which prompted discussions on gender stereotypes and gender and sexual diversity in teacher education programs. Other legislative measures, such as the Anti-Discrimination Law (Chile, 2012) and the Gender Identity Law (Chile, 2018), have further reinforced this commitment to protect LGBTIQ++ peoples' rights.

The 2018 Chilean feminist movement accelerated institutional changes at universities regarding gender mainstreaming, such as the implementation of protocols against sexual harassment and the creation of Offices of Gender (Gaba, 2023). These offices are now responsible for implementing policies to reduce gender-based inequalities and violence and promoting the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ students. Additionally, the enactment of the law “Regulating sexual harassment and gender-based violence and discrimination in higher education” (Law No. 21369) in 2021 provided legal support for these transformations.

Despite recent advances, most teacher education programs continue to lack specific courses addressing gender and sexuality. Available evidence indicates that only one out of 132 programs offered a course explicitly related to sexuality. In contrast, approximately one-third included a course on diversity, such as School Inclusion, Diversity and Education, or Human Rights and Diversity (Astudillo Lizama & Faúndez García, 2021). Furthermore, 88% (30) of the country's elementary teacher education programs incorporated a course on diversity and/or special educational needs (Millán, 2021). From interviews with in-service teachers from different cities, Astudillo Lizama and Faúndez García (2021) found a persistent lack of preparation on sexual and gender diversity issues, only tangentially mentioned in developmental psychology courses. The researchers suggest that diversity courses in teacher education primarily focus on different learning styles and special educational needs (SEN), overlooking other dimensions, such as immigration status, gender and sexual diversity, and disability.

Additionally, Astudillo Lizama and Faúndez García (2021) observe that teachers express a demand for greater preparation and practical ‘tools’ related to gender and sexuality, both to address perceived ‘problems’ and to demonstrate professional competence. Moreover, the only two gay and

lesbian teachers interviewed had not disclosed their sexual orientation at their schools, underscoring the pervasive social expectation of cis-heteronormativity and the construction of teachers as ‘desexualized professionals.’ The absence of a formal, comprehensive sex education curriculum in Chile exacerbates this situation.

Poststructural, Intersectional, and Queer Perspectives to Challenge Teacher Education

Ahmed’s work is crucial for examining the tensions surrounding the institutionalization of *diversity*—the ‘happy’ name for intersectionality—which reveals both institutional inertia and resistance (Ahmed, 2012). Also, her analysis of affective economies further illuminates how emotions circulate within institutions and societies, and shape social and political responses to *difference* (Ahmed, 2014). Ahmed (2014) contends that dominant cultural and political narratives in Western countries often frame certain groups—such as immigrants and queer individuals—as existential threats to the continuation of the idealized ways of life.

In this regard, Dhmoon (2010, in Hawkey & Ussher, 2022) proposes four key dimensions for operationalize intersectional research: (a) the specific identities of marginalized individuals or groups, (b) the categories of difference under analysis (e.g., gender, race, sexuality), (c) the social processes that construct these differences (such as racialization or gendering), and (d) the broader systems of oppression that shape these experiences, including racism, colonialism, and heteropatriarchy.

Finally, the concept of discourse is central as it denotes the articulation between knowledge and power that operates within social relations and institutions (Foucault, 1978; Jackson & Mazzei, 2022). From a Foucauldian perspective, knowledge is not understood as neutral, pure, or inherently true or false; instead, it is embedded within historically and politically specific *regimes of truth*. In this framework, particular historical and cultural conditions shape what can be thought, said, or known within a given social context. These conditions act upon discourse through diverse mechanisms of exclusion, prohibition, separation, and classification—especially of knowledge related to bodies and subjectivities. For instance, the modern and Western project of *scientia sexualis* constructed ‘sex’ and ‘sexuality’ as knowledge objects (Foucault, 1978).

Methodology

I designed a critical qualitative case study focused on the Elementary Teacher Education programs from two universities, drawing on an assemblage of poststructural, feminist, and queer theories. Institutions and participants were selected through purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) based on two main criteria: (a) for universities, the selection considered distinct institutional projects, student demographics, and geographic location; and (b) for participants, their involvement in courses explicitly addressing gender and/or sexuality, or their institutional roles related to gender equity and/or curricular knowledge.

Regarding the educational level, I focused on Elementary Education programs because there is evidence of reluctance to incorporate gender and sexuality content at the initial levels of school education, given the moral panics associated with childhood innocence (Robinson, 2008). Three program directors were invited to participate through institutional emails; however, the program director from a religious and privately managed university rejected the invitation. Thus, two institutions agreed to participate, María Lugones University (MLU) and Julieta Kirkwood University (JKU; both pseudonyms).

MLU is a state university established in 2015 in a southern region of the country. JKU is a private institution established in the 1980s in a metropolitan area with a social justice project.

Concerning the institutional and demographic differences, MLU is minor compared to JKU regarding undergraduate student enrollment, faculty, and infrastructure.

The Scientific Ethics Committee of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile approved this study in June 2022. Participants completed an informed consent process, ensuring anonymity and protection of personal information by using pseudonyms for names and institutions. Course names were also slightly modified to protect confidentiality.

Participants, Data Production and Analysis

Key actors from each program, including teacher educators, program directors, and directors of the Office of Gender, were interviewed. Two focus groups were conducted with preservice teachers from each university. In total, 16 people participated in this study (Table 1). I also analyzed graduate profiles and syllabi of relevant courses.

Table 1

Characterization of Participants

Name	Role	Academic Degree
<i>María Lugones University (MLU)</i>		
Paula	University Gender Mainstreaming Coordinator (Full-time position)	English Teacher and M.A. in International Education
Diego	Elementary Teacher Education Program's director (Full-time position)	Mathematics Teacher, M.A. in Education
Camila	Assistant Professor at the School of Education (Half-time position). Teacher of 'School Climate' and 'Child and Youth Development' courses.	Psychologist, Ph.D. in Psychology
Isabel	Part-time (Hourly paid) professor at the School of Education. Teacher of the 'Diversity and Inclusion' course.	B.A. in History and Social Science, Ph.D. in Education
	Four female preservice teachers (undergraduate students)	
<i>Julieta Kirkwood University (JKU)</i>		
Valentina	Director of the Office of Gender (Full-time position)	Psychologist. M.A. in Organizational Psychology
Gabriela	Elementary Teacher Education Program's director (Full-time position)	Elementary Teacher, Master's in Family
Alejandra	Academic Coordinator of the Elementary Education Teaching Program and Part-time Professor at the School of Education. Teacher of the 'Sexuality Education' elective course.	Elementary Teacher, Diploma in Sex Education

Name	Role	Academic Degree
Sebastián	School of Education Coordinator (Full-time position)	History and Social Science Teacher, Ph.D. in Higher Education
Diana	Part-Time (Hourly-paid) Professor at the School of Education. Teacher of 'Diversity and Human Rights' course	History and Social Science Teacher, Ph.D. (c) in Education
	Three female preservice teachers (undergraduate students)	

Note: Own elaboration

The primary data corpus was generated through semi-structured, photo-elicited interviews and focus groups (Denzin, 2001; Harper, 2002), which explored participants' academic trajectories, institutional contexts, personal standpoints, and—for teacher educators—their curricular and pedagogical practices related to GM and GSD. The terminology used in the interviews was “gender topics” and “sexual diversity topics.” Additionally, in the photo-elicited conversation (Harper, 2002), the participants reflected on the challenges they perceive for teacher education while observing selected images such as feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements in Chile and marches against ‘gender ideology’ in schools, among others. The interviews, conducted between September 2022 and July 2023, lasted between 1 hour and 1.5 hours each, and all were audio-recorded for later naturalized transcription. For the interview excerpts' translation from Spanish to English, I considered a professional academic tone while preserving the speakers' styles. Since I am not a native English speaker, I utilized ChatGPT (model GPT-4o) and DeepSeek to assist with sentence editing.

For data analysis, I followed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (2021) in six phases, including data familiarization, code generation, theme construction, and refinement. This approach provides flexibility to use critical theoretical perspectives and favors the researcher's reflexivity. During the analysis, I engaged with post-structural thinking (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022; Søndergaard, 2002) and “its curiosity about the subjectivating processes, the constructions of social and cultural conditions, the effects of discursive power” (Søndergaard, 2002, p. 189). Data familiarization consisted of reading and memoing the entire corpus. Subsequently, all documents were open-coded with the support of Atlas.ti software. Codes were reviewed in the following analytical phase to detect similarities and irrelevancies. For the definition of themes, the inductive codes were grouped according to common aspects, leading to the creation of code groups such as “Institutionalization and gender mainstreaming,” “Pedagogical and curricular dimension,” and “Queer identities.” These code groups were preliminary categories and organized into a thematic map to finally refine the main themes.

I acknowledge my positionality and professional trajectory as relevant to this study. I am a cisgender, bisexual man from a middle-class background with Mapuche heritage. My professional experience includes teaching modules on gender mainstreaming and LGBTIQ+ inclusion for preservice teachers at a private university in Santiago, Chile. Thanks to feminist friends and colleagues, I learned to ‘put on the gender lens’ and to build alliances and solidarities.

To ensure trustworthiness and engage in community-based validation, I employed member-checking techniques. I shared a draft of the main results and conclusions with all participants via email and subsequently conducted a member-checking focus group with both Directors of Gender Offices. Their feedback was incorporated to refine and clarify the contested interpretations.

Results and Discussion

In this heuristic exploration of the institutional, curricular, and pedagogical discourses within two elementary teacher education programs, I identified *gender mainstreaming* and *the value of diversity* as the predominant institutional discourses. At the curricular level, two principal orientations emerged: a *diagnosis–solution* framework and a *human rights-based* approach. Finally, the key pedagogical discourses included *embodied learning*, *evidence-based teaching*, and *human rights advocacy*.

Gender Mainstreaming and Diversity as Institutional Discourses

Valentina (Director of the Office of Gender at JKU since 2018) and Paula (Gender Mainstreaming Coordinator in the Office of Gender at MLU since 2021) positioned themselves as feminist and non-heterosexual women, and both hold postgraduate degrees. According to their accounts, institutional resistance appeared especially when they articulated feminist perspectives—not to say intersectional or queer—to frame their institutional work (Ahmed, 2012). Valentina described herself as navigating a complex position between the institutional requirements and the more radical demands of feminist students. For certain authorities, she was a ‘radical feminist,’ while among student activists, she was a ‘yellow’¹ bureaucrat. In a sense, the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in Chilean universities works as a strategy to contain the ‘feminist anger’ (Ahmed, 2014, p. 176) expressed by mobilized students during the 2018 feminist protests (Troncoso et al., 2019).

Valentina and Paula were conducting a curricular analysis with a gender perspective across all undergraduate syllabi at their universities, evaluating if courses’ contents reflected pertinent gender issues, examining the required text selections to improve gender parity in authorship, and checking the use of non-sexist language in curricular documents. After these analyses, the gender practitioners sent their reports and suggestions to the curricular units from each program, which are autonomous in their curricular decisions. Valentina labeled education programs and their teams as ‘cooperative, open, and progressive’ compared to other disciplines, such as engineering and sciences, in terms of reception of gender mainstreaming work. Paula expressed a similar view of education programs at MLU. However, most departments and programs understood *gender* as a synonym for *women*, according to Valentina. She recognized this limit for gender mainstreaming in curricular analysis and innovation.

In terms of absences, both gender practitioners emphasized the importance of addressing sexual and gender-based violence in teacher education: “The [TTE] curriculum lacks explicit content on the legal responsibilities of students during their practicum, particularly regarding [sexual] abuse or violence against children” (Paula).

The Language of Diversity in Teacher Education

The graduate profile of the MLU elementary teaching program highlighted: “Graduates are teachers committed to all children's learning; they value diversity and possess a strong professional identity and a deep commitment to the social purpose of the teaching profession.” Within Chile's accountability-driven educational system (Falabella, 2015), a “commitment to all children's learning” can be understood as aligning with expectations to cover the mandatory curriculum and address students' learning difficulties. At the same time, the term *diversity* is particularly loaded, given the recent shifts in educational policy. For instance, the School Inclusion Law of 2015 establishes that

¹ The term “yellow” is often used in Latin American social movement contexts to refer to someone who is seen as co-opted, moderate, or not genuinely committed to a cause.

the education system must promote the diversity of institutional projects and respect the cultural, religious, and social backgrounds of families who opt for specific educational models. Additionally, it links diversity to principles of inclusion and non-discrimination, promoting schools as inclusive spaces for students from varied socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, gender, national, and religious backgrounds (Chile, 2015, Art. 1, b and e).

The interview with Diego, director of the elementary teacher education program at MLU, is illustrative of the ‘language of diversity.’ As Ahmed (2012) noted, “diversity becomes something to be managed and valued as a human resource (...)” (p. 53). In education, this rhetoric is intended to neutralize issues of power, conflicts, and cultural politics (Matus & Infante, 2011). However, the interview also reflects the curricular fragmentation and the pressure of quality assessment processes:

I’m also personally sensitive to issues of diversity because I’m gay, and that’s something I share in the spaces where I teach—not in a formal or forced way, but rather in moments like when we introduce ourselves (...) [from the perspective of teacher education] I think we need to create *mechanisms to identify that diversity* and think about how to respond to it—how to take responsibility for it. I’m not sure that the courses we currently offer take that on. (...) I don’t know if there’s an integrated perspective on addressing these issues. It feels more like picking a bit from here, a bit from there, and *trying to ‘operationalize’ it* somehow. Perhaps *the course ‘Diversity in the classroom’ should take this on more explicitly.* (emphasis added)

In the first line of the excerpt, Diego’s self-disclosure reflects a practice of personal and professional positioning that disrupts the presumed neutrality of academic spaces. His account suggests an unintended pedagogical practice aligned with the embodied queer curriculum and pedagogy (Staley & Blackburn, 2023). Diego noted that the core curriculum is fragmented regarding diversity, and he acknowledged that his team had primarily prioritized other urgent matters, such as ensuring complete coverage of disciplinary content in the elementary teacher education program across its various majors, rather than discussing the curricular integration of diversity and inclusion. Since teacher education programs must address curricular requirements to meet the demands of university quality assessment processes (Castillo-Paredes et al., 2022), diversity is often delegated to one specific course or experts, such as the team in charge of the transversal courses in this teacher education program.

Diagnosis-Solution and Human Rights as Curricular Discourses with Diversity Courses

Diversity in the Classroom (MLU) and Diversity and Human Rights (JKU) were semester-long courses required for all TE programs. Both courses included, alongside other forms of *diversity* (such as cultural diversity or special educational needs), a unit covering “gender” and “gender and sexual diversity” in two or three weeks (Table 2).

The Diversity in the Classroom course at MLU, in the fifth semester (out of 10), addressed aspects of the Chilean educational system and school inclusion, gender issues, gender and sexual diversity, cultural diversity and migrants, special educational needs, and innovation for educational inclusion. Regarding gender issues and gender and sexual diversity, these discourses appeared conflated as “socio-educational variables affecting students’ learning and social participation in school” (syllabus). In 2019, the course had four sections with four different instructors, mostly psychologists, and students from different majors were mixed in these sections. By framing sexual and gender diversity as potential barriers to learning, this curricular approach relies on a diagnostic logic that mirrors the medical model, without interrogating the epistemological and political

implications of the diagnosis–solution framework (Millán, 2021). It aligns with neoliberal discourses on diversity (Matus & Infante, 2011), which tend to assume that differences are stable and discrete, rather than socially and historically constructed.

Table 2

Syllabus Comparison of GM and GSD in Core Diversity Courses in Two Teacher Education Programs

	MLU	JKU
GM Topics	Gender perspective applied to education and the role of teachers.	Gender as a cultural construction. The diverse expressions of gender-based violence in Chile today. Non-sexist Education.
Readings on GM	Not declared.	Optional readings: 'Violence against women in relationships,' 'The school reproduces gender stereotypes,' or 'Gender equity in the school system.'
GSD Topics	Diagnostic of Gender and Sexual Diversity Inclusion in Education.	The human rights of the LGTBIQ+ community. Sexual diversity at school.
Readings on GSD	Not declared.	Optional readings: 'Sexual diversity in the school' or 'The human rights of LGTBIQ+ people in Chile.'
Duration of the Unit on GM and GSD	Three weeks (90-minute classes per week)	One week on GM and another one on GSD (80-minute classes per week)

Note: Own elaboration based on 2019's syllabi. Newer versions of these courses may have been updated.

The Diversity and Human Rights course at JKU, in the first semester (out of 10), aims to conceptualize the school as a space for the dignification and humanization of individuals, recognizing that the rights of children and young people must be safeguarded within a democratic society. The first unit explores the global human rights legal framework, covering key declarations, conventions, and institutions. The second unit addresses contemporary human rights violations in Latin America, focusing on Chile, and including classes related to gender issues and gender and sexual diversity. It is important to note that the course was designed by a well-known lesbian activist and human rights advocate, who also prepared an instructional team. Drawing on a human rights framework, this curricular approach emphasizes the legal recognition of rights and the historical and ongoing struggles of women and LGTBIQ+ people, globally and locally. By situating gender and sexual diversity within the broader field of human rights, this approach foregrounds the sociohistorical conditions under which rights have been claimed and denied. In doing so, it may offer a critical lens through which preservice teachers can interrogate the origins of gendered and sexual differences as socially constructed categories, shaped by power (Foucault, 1978).

In addition to these courses, the interviewees referred to other curricular spaces for GM and GSD (Table 3). For instance, Gabriela, program director at the JKU teaching program, emphasized that while the current curriculum has flaws, it provides comprehensive and complementary preparation for preservice teachers in gender, sexuality, and human rights. She explained, "I think that Diversity and Human Rights, Leadership and School Climate courses, plus the Sex Education elective, are like a continuum that helps and gives them [students] tools."

Table 3*GM/GSD-Related Content in Other Required and Elective Courses*

Course Title (Type)	GM/GSD-Related Content
Julieta Kirkwood University (JKU) Sexuality Education (Elective)	Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), sexual and reproductive rights, gender, interculturality, sexual violence prevention, adolescent pregnancy, STIs/HIV prevention.
Leadership and School Climate (Required)	General topics such as socio-educational development and school violence prevention.
María Lugones University (MLU) Child Development (Required)	Encourages critical reflection on gender socialization and inclusion. Inclusive approach to development; includes a reading on Education and feminism.
Youth Development (Required) Family, School, and Community (Required)	Gender identity and socialization in youth development. Contemporary family structures: mentions of same-sex families in Latin America.
School Climate (Required)	Diversity, gender-based violence, and protection of trans students. Includes a key reading: 'Trans Children's Rights in Education Act (Chile, 2021).

Note: Own elaboration based on interviews and syllabi analysis.

From a poststructural perspective (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022), it is important to caution, however, that the previous analysis risks reinforcing a binary idea in which the *human rights-based* approach is positioned as inherently “good” and the *diagnosis–solution* framework as “bad.” Such a dichotomy overlooks the complex institutional, political, and historical conditions through which these discourses have come to shape curriculum and pedagogical practices in the two cases.

As noted earlier, Diversity and Human Rights was designed by a well-known lesbian and human rights advocate who mentored a faculty team. This detail speaks to the political intentionality behind the course design and reflects JKU's broader institutional scale and comparatively greater academic capacity. Since MLU is a newly established state university, its undergraduate programs are new and still consolidating stable instructional teams; teacher education programs are under additional pressure due to accreditation processes (Castillo-Paredes et al., 2022). As a result, teaching staff often face precarious working conditions and limited institutional support (Simbürger & Neary, 2016). For instance, after a colleague's sudden withdrawal, Isabel—a recent Ph.D. graduate—was hired as a ‘taxi-professor’ to take over a diversity course's section well after the semester had begun. The following section presents her experience and those of other teacher educators and preservice teachers.

Pedagogical Discourses

Embodied Learning Approach

Isabel, who holds a PhD in education and was a popular sex educator, taught a section of the Diversity in the Classroom course in 2019 at MLU. In her interview, she noted and criticized the

‘diagnosis’ approach (Millán, 2021), stating: “At the end of the semester, all students must *diagnose* a school and plan a program or an activity or something else [Isabel sighs], with a *project-management logic*, very technocratic, and a multiple-choice standardized evaluation was the final exam” (emphasis added). From her perspective, this curricular framework constrained opportunities for more profound student learning.

In contrast, Isabel promoted critical awareness of gender and sexuality, prioritizing personal transformations in her students over purely conceptual knowledge. Her initial activity for the course, “The wall of insults,” was an example of this embodied learning approach. She asked students to write every insult they knew on the blackboard; the class then collectively analyzed the social relationships underlying them: “And always the most predominant [social relationships] are about gender and sexuality (...) for example, ‘hijo de perra’ (‘Son of a bitch’), ‘culiado’ (‘Fucked’).” This pedagogy aligns with feminist and queer educational approaches that privilege embodied understanding, affective engagement, and the interrogation of normative assumptions over the mere transmission of conceptual knowledge (hooks, 1994; Staley & Blackburn, 2023).

Similarly, Alejandra—a teacher educator with a background in sex education—emphasizes personal and biographical reflection in her elective course Sexuality Education at JKU. She has taught the course multiple times and focuses on “deconstructing our sexuality,” a process she considers fundamental for fostering critical awareness among preservice teachers. Before the first class, students write an anonymous biographical essay on their experiences with and learning about sexuality. Alejandra begins by sharing her own journey to foster an environment of trust and confidentiality. Throughout the course, students frequently identify gaps in their knowledge, particularly concerning protocols for sexual harassment and abuse, sexual consent, and how to address situations like students masturbating in the classroom. This account underscores the disparity between preservice teachers' preparation and the complex realities they will face.

Evidence-Based Approach

Since her doctoral research, Camila, a psychologist engaged with non-sexist education, emphasized integrating non-sexist principles into her teaching. At MLU, she teaches transversal courses like School Climate, Child Development, and Youth Development for TE programs. She grounded her pedagogy in empirical evidence of sexism, homophobia, and transphobia in schools, while also noting the need for more research on queer and feminist pedagogies to inform educational transformation. During her photo-elicited interview using an image of an anti-gender ideology march, Camila recalled her experience teaching the School Climate course and the evolution of one Christian evangelical student’s views throughout the semester. She described using trans victimization data to facilitate class discussions:

For instance, when we discussed trans students and looked at suicide rates, using data from surveys—surveys on well-being and bullying, which show much higher rates of suicide—he [the Christian evangelical student] would respond, “Yeah, but is that really the reason they go through that? (...) I was bullied too, and I never thought of killing myself.” That kind of very cold, lacking empathy response. (...)

Camila addressed his resistance by facilitating open discussion and introducing an ecological model contextualizing social phenomena like suicide within multiple systems, from family to society. By the semester's end, the student had developed a more nuanced perspective, acknowledging structural and relational factors.

This encounter illustrates how educational spaces function as sites of subjectivation (Foucault, 1978; Jackson & Mazzei, 2022). From a Foucauldian perspective, the evangelical student is initially positioned—perhaps by himself too—as the antithesis of a “progressive” subject, embodying a form of religious and moral conviction, alongside an emotional detachment from ‘sinful’ others. In Camila’s classes, however, his subjectivity was rendered problematic, as he resisted the affective and ethical expectations of empathy, openness, and critical reflexivity. The student’s transformation can be read as a process of *subjectivation*—a reconfiguration of his position within a discursive field that values particular forms of sensitivity, relationality, and recognition. Additionally, the evangelical student’s resistance to *difficult knowledge* (Britzman, 1995) must also be situated within a broader context of territorial and cultural marginalization, where religious institutions often serve as primary moral and educational authorities.

Human-rights Advocacy

Diana, initially a teacher assistant and then a lead instructor—as a taxi-professor—, taught the Diversity and Human Rights course at JKU in an “intensively dialogical way,” addressing “shocking and difficult issues of Chilean society.” Her pedagogical goal was to reach all her students: “We had evangelical students, or maybe from the right-wing, and I wanted to reach those students too (...) because you can't be a transphobic, homophobic, discriminatory teacher, you legally can't.” This emphasis on ethical and legal obligations has been incorporated into workshops for preservice teachers in Canada, with the presence of religious students (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012). As Kitchen and Bellini (2012) note, “several participants disclosed a level of personal discomfort due to religious convictions (...) Whatever one's personal beliefs, a teacher has a moral and legal obligation to respect every student and prevent harrassment (sic) and bullying” (p. 457).

The emphasis on human rights violations of marginalized groups raises a critical pedagogical question. While empathy can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool, it may also inadvertently reinforce the perception that women and LGBTIQ+ people are inherently damaged by prioritizing the study of harm (Tuck, 2009). In this regard, balancing narratives of resilience and agency with discussions of systemic violence may contribute to a critical comprehension of these identities.

Diana explained that the course aimed to foster an “activist vocation” by inviting human rights activists to engage with students. These activists, who were not necessarily teachers, shared firsthand accounts of their experiences in civil society. Among the activists invited to the classes was the mother of a trans girl who became an icon of the recognition of trans children's rights in Chile. Also, trans/drag performers and LGBTIQ+ activists visited the classes. Diana reflected that, following the 2018 feminist movement, some students were often more informed than the instructors: “they knew more than we did (...) As we were not experts, we tried to rely more on the guests [activists].” The strategy of inviting queer activists makes visible the lives and bodies that have been marginalized and, at the same time, presents them as relevant social actors for preservice teachers. This practice is a form of anti-oppressive education and works against biased representation and exclusion of certain groups, challenging the students' common understanding (Kumashiro, 2000).

Preservice Teachers' Perspectives

Students from both universities indicated that their preparation in GM and GSD remains insufficient—a concern aligned with practicing teachers' perceptions in Chile (Astudillo Lizama & Faúndez García, 2021). MLU students noted a lack of rigorous engagement with GSD concepts and the invisibility of issues related to transgender identities in education. Meanwhile, JKU participants highlighted a gap in pedagogical tools for LGBTIQ+ student inclusion and the handling of incidents

with sexual connotations (e.g., masturbation, pornography, and sexualized language) or those involving sexual abuse.

Four female students from different cohorts at MLU recognized Diversity in the Classroom as one of the few courses that addressed gender and sexuality. However, they largely perceived its primary focus as being on special educational needs (SEN) and school inclusion policies, with only a “small unit on gender.” According to one student, the course dedicated only “two or three classes” to gender issues and GSD, which were primarily spent on “defining each term,” such as gender, sex, and sexual orientation. Another student recalled creating an informative brochure outlining the meanings of the LGBTQ acronym. While some students appreciated this inclusion, they also noted that gender and sexual diversity were introduced only at a conceptual level, lacking depth and critical engagement. Moreover, two students observed that their professor struggled to distinguish certain concepts with which they were already familiar. The conversation with these preservice teachers highlights the tokenistic or “formal” inclusion of gender and sexuality topics. While technically present, these topics are treated superficially, without fostering critical thinking or engaging with the emotional discomfort involved in *queering* teacher education (Staley & Blackburn, 2023). These findings reflect the increasing awareness of new generations regarding GM and GSD. However, they may also indicate a diminished sense of agency among preservice teachers, potentially reinforced by a neoliberal approach to higher education (Simbürger & Donoso, 2020). This situation underscores the persistent demand for more ‘practical tools’ to address diversity (Matus & Infante, 2011). The students at MLU also highlighted the absence of discussions on the case of José Matías, a young trans student who died by suicide in 2019 following transphobic bullying and sexual harassment at their school—despite Circular No. 768, a policy designed to protect trans students. The case of José Matías sparked a political debate on schools' responsibilities in protecting trans students and ensuring their mental well-being. Additionally, MLU students agreed that while sexual and gender diversity is more visible today, “men aren’t interested in learning about gender (...) they continue to dominate discussions, even in [feminized] TE programs.” One notable gap in teacher education is the absence of a focus on masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), an essential dimension for fostering critical gender awareness.

For JKU students, the courses Diversity and Human Rights and Sex Education were their primary sources of learning about GM and GSD. One student noted:

We talked a lot about diversity, about respecting diversity, and how diversity is seen in schools, in the classroom (...). We are constantly asked [in different courses] that the questions we plan for our classes are diversified, or promote participation, that we don't have these... like biases.

Additionally, JKU students expressed concern over the elective nature of Sex Education, noting that it was possible to graduate without any exposure to comprehensive sex education. It was noted during the interviews that the new curriculum at JKU will include Sex Education as a mandatory course to address this gap.

During the focus group with JKU students, one female preservice teacher shared a personal and unsettling experience. Reflecting on her practicum at an all-boys school, she recounted a moment when a primary school student hugged her from behind and tried to touch underneath her clothes. She expressed feelings of powerlessness, recalling that she chose not to report the incident to anyone at the school or to her university supervisor. She explained, “I was afraid of losing the school, especially because I loved that school, and I got along really well with my students, my teacher, and everything, so I wasn't willing to lose that because of the situation.”

This powerful account reveals the need for support and affirmative action for female and LGBTIQ+ students, as they may face difficulties during practicum that are rendered invisible. International literature recognizes that preservice teachers face significant tensions between their university-based preparation and the realities of their school placements regarding gender and sexuality (Murphy & Ní Dhuinn, 2022; Zackariasson, 2015). Gabriela (JKU), the program director, acknowledged that complex issues arose during practicum, and she highlighted that additional workshops are conducted before students enter their internships, covering topics such as sexual consent and detecting child abuse. These workshops aim to provide students with practical tools to confront such issues in real-life classroom settings. However, they seem insufficient to counteract hegemonic discourses of childhood innocence (Robinson, 2008) and to engage preservice teachers with difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1995) regarding gender and sexuality.

Conclusions and Recommendations

One of the primary motivations for this study was to identify institutional, curricular, and pedagogical pathways for integrating more critical perspectives on gender and sexuality into teacher education. This focus is a response to the predominance of pluralistic yet depoliticized views of diversity in higher education (Matus & Infante, 2011; Zabala-Eisshofer, 2025), the limitations of liberal LGBTIQ+ inclusion (Leonardi & Moses, 2021), and the complex processes through which feminist perspectives become institutionalized (Gaba, 2023).

The present study confirms that the everyday demands of university life, combined with accreditation pressures (Castillo-Paredes et al., 2022), contribute to the erasure of gender and sexuality in teacher preparation, particularly within newly established institutions. Furthermore, it documents how teacher educators navigate precarious labor conditions and curricular constraints to implement thought-provoking pedagogical strategies, drawing on frameworks such as popular education, human rights-based education, and evidence-based approaches to countering sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

In both cases, curricular spaces for GM and GSD remain marginal in the mandatory preparation of elementary teachers. They are generally restricted to two or three sessions within broader diversity courses, with only brief references in subjects like school climate and developmental psychology. This marginalization is consistent with international literature (Airton & Koecher, 2019; Resa Ocio, 2023). Additionally, primary efforts to incorporate feminist or anti-homophobic perspectives are undertaken by individual faculty members rather than through coordinated institutional initiatives, as acknowledged by Resa Ocio (2023) and Airton and Koecher (2019). One possible pathway for educational policy is the incorporation of stronger requirements into pedagogical standards, for example, by mandating an intersectional approach to gender issues and including comprehensive sexuality education in teacher preparation. However, both the intersectional perspective and CSE are currently subject to strong contestation, challenged by both neoconservative (Morán Faúndes, 2022) and liberal (see Leonardi & Moses, 2021) viewpoints.

Nevertheless, preservice teachers themselves express a stronger demand for this preparation during their practicum experiences, when issues of gender and sexuality emerge in concrete ways, frequently in relation to violence and abuse, and sometimes disrupting their prevalent discourses of childhood innocence (Robinson, 2008). These cases highlight a particularity of the Chilean and broader Latin American context. Here, the practicum experience often directly surfaces a pressing *demand for tools* to address gender and sexuality-based violence and exclusion. The university's core curriculum does not always meet this demand. This contrasts with findings from European studies, where the documented tension for preservice teachers frequently lies in navigating the *clash* between their university's inclusive principles and the resistant norms of their practicum schools (Murphy &

Ní Dhuinn, 2022; Zackariasson, 2015). While both contexts involve exclusion and violence, the Chilean case underscores a gap in practical preparedness against overt challenges, whereas the European studies often highlight conflicts of values and socio-cultural resistances encountered in school placements. An intersectional approach (Hawkey & Ussher, 2022) would enrich pedagogical reflections during practicum by enabling preservice teachers to critically engage with how class, ethnicity, territory, and religion shape everyday school experiences related to gender and sexuality.

The cases also highlight the crucial role played by faculty and professionals identifying as feminists and LGBTIQ+ in pushing the boundaries of GM and GSD in initial teacher education. This role constitutes an important finding in the search for ways to dismantle the hidden curriculum of heteronormativity (Carpenter & Lee, 2010). The experiences of Valentina, Paula, and Diego as non-heterosexual and visible figures in higher Education are relevant not only for students but also for their colleagues and department chairs.

Drawing on the JKU experience, a human rights-based approach affirms human dignity and fosters ethical and legal awareness among future teachers. International literature emphasizes that this approach is particularly practical for anti-homophobic preparation when working with students with conservative beliefs (e.g., Kitchen & Bellini, 2012). At the same time, Airton and Koecher's (2019) review highlighted numerous studies documenting explicit resistance and homophobic attitudes among evangelical Christian preservice teachers toward GSD preparation. In this study, the figure of the evangelical Christian student appeared in several interviews, underscoring the need to reconsider pedagogical strategies that mobilize difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1995) and unsettle identity constructions based on strong religious beliefs.

Institutional collaboration between university-based teacher education and activist organizations has been highlighted by studies in other countries, such as Ireland (Murphy & Ní Dhuinn, 2022). At JKU, one practical pedagogical approach involved inviting LGBTIQ+ rights activists to discuss with preservice teachers; I recommend expanding on this approach through service-learning partnerships with activist organizations. I contend that such initiatives contribute to curricular innovation, informed by lived experiences and grassroots perspectives, and foster connections between universities and communities (Murphy & Ní Dhuinn, 2022).

In sum, incorporating gender mainstreaming and a focus on gender and sexual diversity into the teacher education curriculum requires a concerted effort from academic teams to critically examine their understandings of these concepts, as well as a public policy discussion. However, this effort is constrained by Chilean higher education's neoliberal logic. Gender and sexuality are not merely abstract categories but lived experiences that shape our sense of identity, while simultaneously being shaped by regimes of truth (Foucault, 1978), such as neoliberalism itself. For this reason, it is essential to consider intersectional, queer, and trans perspectives (Ahmed, 2012; Britzman, 1995; Keenan, 2022; Staley & Blackburn, 2023), which are often excluded from dominant understandings of gender and sexuality. Therefore, addressing these challenges requires institutional planning and commitment rather than isolated initiatives for teacher education programs. I concur with Cordero-Aliaga and Romero-López (2025), who argue that GM must be incorporated as a mandatory aspect through specific courses, alongside a transversal presence throughout teacher education programs. This principle equally applies to GSD. However, the prevalence of precariously employed *taxi-professors* (Simbürger & Neary, 2016) and the overwhelming pressure of accreditation processes (Castillo-Paredes et al., 2022) work against the sustained institutional planning and commitment required. Yet, even within a neoliberal framework, we can still count on the agency of preservice teachers, the momentum of grassroots and social movements, and the creativity of community partnerships to drive the change that institutional structures often resist, pointing the way toward a more inclusive future for teacher education.

Finally, I acknowledge several limitations of this study. First, my research questions remain framed within the “language of diversity” (Ahmed, 2012), even as I sought to challenge it. Second, although I am theoretically committed to intersectionality, this perspective is not applied consistently across the analysis. Moreover, the heuristic exploration of pedagogical approaches presented here requires greater depth and continuity, which could be advanced through classroom observations and the analysis of student coursework and discourse. Future research should also address professional development workshops and in-service teacher education.

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