

Best practice in pre-service teacher training in Sexuality and Sexual Health: how built-in Knowledge Translation leads to implementation

Background:

Sexuality and sexual health education (SSHE) in schools promotes sexual health and is a human right. Appropriate pre-service and early career teacher training is an essential precursor to high quality, comprehensive SSHE. The objective of this study was to translate evidence from an integrated study series into policy and practice.

Methods:

Design: theory-based Knowledge Translation (KT) forum

Participants: purposive sample of stakeholders: school education academics, government representatives from Health and Education, representatives from the public, private and Catholic education sectors, professional development organisations, non-government education providers and youth-led education providers.

Data Collection: Simplified Lavis and Grimshaw frameworks adapted as guides for recorded discussions.

Data Analysis: descriptive content and thematic analyses of transcripts. Inductive thematic analysis from data pertaining to the KT principle 'What knowledge should be transferred?'. Content analysis and organisation of topics was applied to the 'To Whom', 'How' and 'Likely barriers and facilitators' principles of KT.

Ethics: University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee (2024/HE000235).

Results:

Fourteen stakeholders participated in February 2025. Five themes pertaining to first KT principle were: 1) SSHE is marginalised, of lower priority and can feel unsafe 2) the passion of academics, students and recent graduates is encouraging 3) the perceived immutability of the Syllabus is striking 4) SSHE appears to be taught variably 5) the gender imbalance in the workforce is concerning. Descriptive content analysis findings were organised into short, medium and longer term actions. Results were incorporated into an 18-month Implementation Plan and accepted by an intersectoral government committee.

Conclusion: the inclusion of theory-based Knowledge Translation into an integrated study series enabled a multi-stakeholder-informed Implementation Plan adopted by key government departments. This ensures that research findings will be not only disseminated, but translated, beyond academia and into ongoing collaborations.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

This study was funded by NSW Health.