“RIGHT LOVE”: AN EMERGENT AND CONTESTED DISCOURSE ON GENDER, SEXUALITY AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN HIGH SCHOOL IN HANOI, CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE) FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY 2008

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ABSTRACT

Gender, sexuality and reproductive health (GSRH) in education are important in youth’s development both physically and spiritually. This research intended to explore the interplay of existing discourses on GSRH that cultivate youth through current high school textbooks and practices, how these discourses are employed in schooling practices and the implications in promoting positive and healthy GSRH for youth.

The study employed qualitative approach, using poststructuralist perspective. The design comprises two components, textbook analysis using Foucault’s genealogical approach, articulated in textual-oriented discourse analysis model and ethnographic study in school practices. For textbook analysis, three types of human science were selected, for ethnographic part, two high schools in Hanoi were chosen. Informants were recruited based on sex and grade for students; for teachers, based on their teaching subjects, for counselors on experience of student management. Ten students both female and male, aged from 16 to 18 in 10, 11, and 12 grades; five teachers, four counselors were recruited for in-depth interview. Observations on school structure, regulations, and classroom sessions were carried out.

The findings from textbook analysis showed how GSRH discourses employed to claim truths as individualizing and totalizing techniques for technologies of the self and nation-building. In literature, humanism and nationalism in the making of femininity and masculinity; in biology, GSRH as biological back up for moral, and political discourses; while in civics, discourses emphasis on youth as modern socialist citizens. In school practices, the bio-politics show how educators uphold their professional expertise and morality through discursive practices and formations while students negotiate their gender and sexuality within diverse GSRH discourses. Recommendations are urge re-conceptualization of youth and their GSRH and rights in the state’s framework, educational sector and community. “Right love” as positive aspects of GSRH in promoting youth’s healthy development and facilitating social changes in education and nation-building. Further research on youth and GSRH issues in practice is suggested.

KEY WORDS: YOUTH/ CRITICAL DISCOURSES ANALYSIS/ SEXUALITY/ GENDER/ VIETNAM

175 pp.