TUTOR

Teachers' upskilling aiming at a holistic inclusivity in learning

Specialism Two:
LGBTQI+ Inclusive Education

Strand One:

Introduction to LGBTQI+ Identities and Issues

Contents

2

3

Introduction

Aims and objectives of the course

This module provides teachers with knowledge, skills, competencies, tools and methods to expand their individual scope for action in terms of practicing inclusive teaching and classroom management, creating and maintaining an inclusive learning environment with specific regard to LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex) students.

To this end, the module facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, and skills aimed to develop an in-depth and complex understanding of the obstacles and challenges faced by LGBTQI+ students. The module promotes self-reflection and critical assessment of school policies, classroom environment, teaching materials, methodologies, approaches and activities. At the same time, the module presents good practices and positive examples of classroom management and inclusive teaching approaches, especially based on the engagement of LGBTQI+ learners and on increasing their visibility in the classroom.

The module, moreover, aims to equip teachers to identify and tackle LGBTQI+-phobic speech and behaviour, including microaggressions, and to prevent bullying. Another crucial aspect of the module is self-reflection on the attitudes, behaviours and patterns that the teachers may have internalized.

Finally, the module equips teachers with skills, knowledge and competencies to mediate conflict, foster acceptance and empathy, and involve different stakeholders in creating more inclusive classroom and school environments.

On completion of this course, a learner will be able to

4

1. Identify microaggressions in the classroom towards LGBTQI+ people and develop strategies to address them.
2. Promote teaching methods that avoid moralizing undertones, shame, or blame.
3. Adopt values such as dialogue, symbolism, acceptance of all, zero tolerance to discrimination
4. Identify and implement LGBTQI+ specific anti-bullying strategies at school.
5. Be able to describe the intersectional nature of a person's identity and how it relates to LGBTQI+ contexts.
6. Develop and utilize strategies to enhance the visibility of LGBTQI+ people within the resources, classroom, and school.
7. Demonstrate sensitivity and awareness when working with LGBTQI+ students, colleagues, families, and communities.
8. Incorporate UDL principles to create supportive learning spaces

Methodology

The learner will engage in 6 hours of Face to Face (F2F) learning and in-class instruction. They will be introduced to new concepts, methodologies and approaches. The course relies heavily on self-reflection and critical analysis, and learners will be invited to engage actively with the learning materials and with each other. Presentations will be accompanied by discussions and peer-learning activities.

14 hours of asynchronous learning will comprise of recorded presentations accompanied by narration and/or annotated slides. The 15 hours of self-directed learning will comprise of assigned readings and journaling, and primarily of a series of activities on research, analysis

and assessment of the local context, as well as the development of strategies to make the classroom more inclusive. Learners who are not active teachers can complete such activities imagining to be working in a local school.

Course will be assessed through the uploading of these exercises into the online platform – only seen by the trainers.

Outline of the course

Unit 1: SOGIESC 101

- Exploring basic concepts regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC).
- Understanding the intersectional nature of SOGIESC.
- Recognizing specific vulnerabilities among LGBTQI+ people and intersectional vulnerabilities (e.g. SOGIGESC and race, ability, socio-economic status etc).
- Interpreting sex, gender and sexuality as historically and socially constructed and culturally dependent.
- Looking at how sex, sexuality and gender can be differently constructed and conceptualised in different school systems and curricula.

Unit 2: Gender-responsive language

- Comprehending the importance of inclusive language in relation to LGBTQI+ identities.
- Learning how to use correct terminology regarding LGBTQI+ identities.
- Learning how to adopt gender-responsive language. Gender-responsive language actively addresses and acknowledges gender disparities and inequalities. It involves intentionally choosing words and phrases that challenge and counteract gender norms and biases.

Unit 3: The experience of LGBTQI+ persons in education.

- Putting experience in context: history, culture, societal values, and socioeconomic condition and their impact on the lived experience and school experience of LGBTQI+ youth.
- Recognizing specific challenges faced by LGBTQI+ youth, e.g. lack of access to mental health, homelessness and poverty, hostile home and school environments, lack of access to gender-affirming healthcare, lack of community support, etc.
- Acknowledging and exploring the experience of LGBTQI+ teachers: obstacles and barriers in the work environment and with school institutions; how are LGBTQI+ teachers seen (in terms of deviation from the norm) and the importance of LGBTQI+ representation among teachers to create a safe space for learners.

Unit 4: Critical assessment:

- Learning to use UDL principles to assess, from a point of view of inclusion and visibility of LGBTQI+ students:
  - the classroom and school physical and digital environment
  - the teaching materials
  - the activities
  - methodologies and approaches

    o   particular attention will be given to teaching materials connected to sex and relationship education, sexuality education, human biology and anatomy.

- Seeing which changes or adaptations can be made to such elements (e.g. promote teaching methods that avoid moralizing undertones, shame, or blame).
- Reflecting, through inclusive design principles, on values to adopt when managing diversity and difference in the classroom (dialogue, symbolism, acceptance of all, zero tolerance to intersectional discrimination).
- Adopting teaching methodologies and approaches that are inclusive and affirming of LGBTQI+ students' identities and experiences. This may involve using diverse examples and case studies that highlight LGBTQI+ individuals and their contributions, as well as incorporating intersectional perspectives that address the complexities of identity.

Unit 5: Microaggressions and bullying

- Identifying microaggressions (including LGBTQI-phobic speech, attitudes and behaviours)
- Identifying bullying
- Auditing your environment from the point of view of microaggressions and bullying
- Developing ad-hoc strategies to address microaggressions and bullying, using inclusive design principles and bystanders' interventions.

Unit 6: Manage conflicts and foster dialogue: How to talk about LGBTQI+ inclusion

- Mapping stakeholders: parents, other teachers, the wider community.
- Recognising the main arguments and practices used to curtail LGBTQI+ rights in the school system.
- Developing strategies to facilitate conversations on LGBTQI+ inclusion and to create a space for dialogue in the classroom and in the school.

6

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC).

This learning module focuses on discrimination and marginalisation based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC), and on the experiences of LGBTQI+ learners.

It is therefore important to start off by creating a basic understanding of the meaning behind these two acronyms.

SOGIESC stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics. These are personal characteristics and traits that everyone has. We will define them in detail below.

LGBTQI+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex. These are identity labels referring to people who belong to gender and sexual minorities. Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual are terms which refer to sexual orientations. Trans is a term that refers to the relationship between gender identity and sex assigned at birth. Intersex is a term that refers to sex characteristics. Queer is an inclusive term covering multiple identities, sometimes used interchangeably with LGBTQI+. It is also used to describe divergence from heterosexual, cisgender and endosex norms.

To summarise:

- L – sexual orientation
- G – sexual orientation
- B – sexual orientation
- T – gender identity and sex assigned at birth
- Q – sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics (can be one or many)
- I – sex characteristics

In the next paragraphs, we will define and explain more in details the concepts outlined above.

Gender

When approaching the concept of gender, it is important to first define sex and gender as two very different concepts.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.	A person's **sex** is an anatomical classification based on a combination of biological characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics. Sex is usually assigned at birth based on the appearance of a person's external anatomy and reflected in the official birth registration.

What does this mean in practice?

When a baby is born, they are assigned a **sex marker** based on their genitalia. In most countries the only two options are male sex or female sex.

Though, in our societies, being male or female is not simply a description of our anatomy but is attached to a set of societal rules and expectations which are specific to being a man (boy) or a woman (girl). These socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men[1] form the concept of **gender**. Most societies divide people into **binary genders** (either man or woman).

When a baby is born and assigned female, the people around them (parents, family, friends) will make assumptions on the identity of that baby based on the fact that they are assigned female. For example, they will buy for them pink clothes, dolls and ponies. If the baby is assigned male, they will likely receive blue clothes, cars and Lego. These assumptions are part of how we, as a society, understand gender. Having these assumptions is not per se negative. Making assumptions is necessary in order to take decisions and simplify situations that would otherwise be too complex. The important thing is to recognise them as such. Therefore, girls often like to play with dolls, but if they prefer to play with cars, Legos or simply to climb trees and play with a dog, that should be seen as equally good.

---

[1] Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210) - article 3.

7

These assumptions also change depending on the age of the person. For example, when growing up women are expected to take up more caring roles, to be better at communication, and to be empathetic. Men are expected to be more assertive, less emotional, and to enjoy games and competition. These societal expectations are in line with our idea of womanhood and manhood. These gender norms make people's behaviour predictable.

Gender identity

While gender is socially constructed, **gender identity** is personal. Gender identity means each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth (sex marker). When it comes to gender identity, we can broadly divide people between cisgender and non-cisgender.

Cisgender (or cis) refers to those persons whose sense of gender identity corresponds with the sex assigned to them at birth. In other words, if a person is assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman, she is cis. Most people are cisgender, and therefore their birth certificate and identity documents correctly reflect their identity.

Trans or transgender are umbrella terms for persons who have a gender identity that is different from predominant social expectations based on the sex assigned at birth, and for persons who wish to portray their gender identity in a different way to the expectations generally based on the sex assigned at birth.

For trans people, there is always a difference between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity:

- Transgender men or trans men are people who identify as men and who were assigned female at birth.

- Transgender women or trans women are persons who identify as women and who were assigned male at birth.

- Non-binary people are persons who do not identify as men or women and who were assigned female or male at birth. Their gender identities fall outside the gender binary of man or woman: they can be neither exclusively male nor female, a combination of male and female or between or beyond genders.

Beyond these three labels, trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender-queer, gender-fluid, gender diverse, demigender, agender, and several others. These terms describe more in detail their personal gender identity. A trans person may choose to modify their bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical, or other means as well as other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

Some people describe gender as a spectrum with 'man' at one end, 'woman' at the other, and non-binary in the middle. This is too simplistic:

- Some non-binary people may have a gender identity which incorporates various aspects of being a man and being a woman.
- Some non-binary people may strongly reject all aspects of being a man or a woman

8

- Some non-binary people may find that how comfortable they feel in any gender fluctuates.[2]

If a person is assigned female at birth but identifies as man, this discrepancy manifests itself in:

- the social realm: people around them continue perceiving them and treating them as a woman.
- the personal realm: they can feel a sense of distress caused by presenting physically in a way that does not correspond to how society expects men to look like.
- the legal realm: identity documents and other official documents record the wrong gender.

To make sure that trans people can live authentically, it is important to have a process in place to overcome these discrepancies. This is called **gender affirmation**, which is a multi-step process as transgender people begin living their lives in a way that affirms their gender identity.

Gender affirmation, also referred to as transition, can be:

- Social: changing name, pronouns, hairstyles, clothes and so on.
- Medical: undergoing hormone therapies or puberty inhibitors, undergoing surgery.
- Legal: the legal recognition of a person's gender identity, including name, legal gender or sex, and other gender-related information, which may be reflected in surnames, social security numbers/personal identification numbers, titles etc., in public registries, records, identification documents (identity cards, passports, driving licences) and other similar documents (educational certificates etc.).

9

Gender expression

Gender expression refers to each person's presentation of their gender identity through physical appearance (including dress, hairstyles, accessories, cosmetics), mannerisms, speech, behavioural patterns, names and personal references. This may or may not conform to the socially expected expressions typically associated with a person's gender or gender identity.

For example, the stereotyped view of a feminine gender expression would include long hair, skirts, make-up, colourful clothes, heels. The stereotyped view of a masculine gender expression would include short hair, clothes in the shades of white, black, grey or brown, low shoes, pants. Expectations regarding masculine and feminine expression vary through space and time. For example, in Scotland men traditionally wear kilts, which are nothing but skirts.

A person whose appearance and behaviour do not fully conform to social expectations based on their gender, is defined as gender non-conforming. A gender non-conforming person can be cis or non-cis. For example, a cis woman can refuse to use make-up, have short hair, and always wear pants. This goes against social expectations related to femininity but says nothing about this person's gender identity.

---

[2] LGBT Youth Scotland (2017). Supporting Transgender Young People: guidance for schools in Scotland, p. 39.

If a person is assigned female at birth but identifies as a man, he might adopt a masculine gender expression, e.g. by cutting his hair and wearing more masculine clothes. Though, there is not one specific way of looking trans, nonbinary or cis.

Children often display gender non-conforming behaviours, because gender norms tend to be less ingrained in children. When a child chooses to wear certain clothes or has a certain hairstyle, interests and hobbies of the 'other' sex, it does not necessarily mean that he or she also feels like the 'other' sex inside. For example, the favourite hobby may be typically boyish or girlish (e.g. football or ballet), without this being linked to feeling like a boy or girl inside. Not every child who displays gender non-conforming behaviour comes out as transgender later on.

Interestingly, girls who show interest in traditionally masculine activities (e.g. science, cars, football) are often celebrated, whereas boys interested in traditionally feminine activities (ballet, fashion, make-up) are often shamed. This happens because in our societies men are still seen as more important than women. Therefore, if a boy behaves as a girl, he is diminishing himself. This stereotyped view of how girls and boys should behave can be very damaging as it restricts the interests, passions and activities which are considered acceptable for each gender.

To sum-up:

(Legal) sex or sex marker.	In most countries male or female.	Based on sex characteristics - genitalia	Anatomical
Gender	in most societies woman (girl) or man (boy)	based on socialization and societal norms	social
Gender identity	cisgender or trans	based on identity.	personal
Gender expression	conforming to gender roles or gender non-conforming	based on behaviour	personal

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation means each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender. This attraction can be experienced in different ways and degrees over a lifetime.

In most societies, the default sexual orientation is heterosexuality ("being straight"). This means that there is a social expectation to be heterosexual and that people are generally

assumed to be heterosexual. Heteronormativity is what makes heterosexuality seem more coherent, natural, and privileged than other sexual orientations. It normalises behaviours and societal expectations that are tied to the presumption of heterosexuality and an adherence to a strict gender binary.

Though, many people can also belong to so-called sexual minorities. For example:

- Gay refers to a man whose primary emotional, affectional and/or sexual attraction is toward other men.
- Bisexual/Bi refers to a person who is emotionally, affectionally and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender.
- Lesbian refers to a woman whose primary emotional, affectional or sexual attraction is toward other women.
- Asexual, or 'ace' refers to a person who does not experience sexual attraction to anyone. A grey-asexual (grey ace/grey-a) person may experience sexual attraction very rarely or only under specific circumstances. Demisexual people only experience sexual attraction after developing a strong emotional bond with someone.
- Aromantic, or 'aro', refers to a person who does not experience romantic attraction and a grey-romantic person only does very rarely. Demiromantic people are only romantically attracted to those they've emotionally bonded with first. Not all ace people are aromantic, but aromantic people are highly represented in the ace community.[3]
- People who experience sexual and romantic attraction to others (and therefore are not asexual or aromantic) are defined as allosexual.

11

Sex characteristics

As mentioned before, sex is assigned at birth based on a baby's genitalia. This happens because of the assumption that if a baby has a vulva, this baby also has all other female sex characteristics, such as a uterus, ovaries, XX chromosomes, and that when growing up she will produce more oestrogen than testosterone, will develop breasts, fat on the hips, and will have less body hair than men. This is true most of the times, but not at all times. In particular, this is true for endosex people, who are the majority, but not for intersex people. Endosex persons are those whose innate sex characteristics fit the normative medical or social ideals for female or male bodies.

Intersex refers to persons who have innate sex characteristic(s), including chromosomal, gonadal, anatomical, or hormonal, that vary from the societal and/or medical understanding(s) of typical female and male bodies. Intersex persons are sometimes also referred to as persons with variations of sex characteristics. The fact that someone has an intersex body can become apparent at different times in their life: at birth, during childhood, in puberty or even in adulthood.

Doctors often advise parents to perform surgical and other medical interventions on intersex new-borns and children, to make their body (seemingly) conform to male or female characteristics. In most cases, such interventions are not medically necessary and can have extremely negative consequences on intersex children as they grow older.

---

[3] Stonewall. (2021, April 06). Six ways to be an ally to asexual people.
https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/six-ways-be-ally-asexual-people

Co-funded by
the European Union

Historically, the term 'intersex' was used as if it was as a disorder that needed medical intervention to 'fix it'. In the past two decades, the term has been reframed and established by intersex human rights defenders and their organisations as the human rights-based umbrella term.[4]

Conclusions

Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics are four different dimensions of a person's identity, and they are independent from each other.

What brings together all these identities is that they go against societal norms, rules and expectations which are tight together, and which can be summarised as: humans are biologically divided into male and female. This creates a binary division between women and men. Women and men adhere to a definite set of norms, rules and expectations. One of these norms is that women and men are romantically and sexually attracted only to each other.

We will explore more about the concepts of gender, gender identity, sexuality and intersectionality in the asynchronous lesson.

Activities

You as the Genderbread Person

Define yourself in terms of the following dimensions:

- sex assigned at birth
- gender
- gender identity
- gender expression
- sexual orientation
- romantic orientation
- sex characteristics

You can use the Genderbread person (v4) to visualise these dimensions and locate yourself on the different spectrums.

The Genderbread person can also be a useful tool to introduce SOGIESC to new audiences.

Gender stereotypes

Throughout the unit, we have talked about assumptions and expectations regarding one's gender. These can be framed as gender stereotypes: preconceived ideas regarding what is appropriate for men and women.

List the gender stereotypes which you associate with men and women.

Take each of these stereotypes and reflect: how can this assumption be damaging for men and women?

Famous LGBTQI+ people

List at least 10 famous people who:

---

[4] Ghattas D. C. (2015). *Standing up for the human rights of intersex people – how can you help?* OII Europe. p. 9. https://www.oiieurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/How-to-be-a-great-intersex-ally-A-toolkit-for-NGOs-and-decision-makers-December-2015.pdf

- are gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- are trans/non-binary.
- are intersex.

Make some research if you don't know any famous person with those identities.

Is there any school class where you could mention one of these people?

Self-Directed Activity:

Read the following text about queer theory.

Reflecting on this reading and on the knowledge acquired in Unit 1.1, write a 300 words text describing how sex, sexuality and gender are constructed, represented and described in the school curricula and learning materials of your country.

Queer theory

Queer theory is an academic field that critically examines the norms surrounding sexuality and gender, particularly how society defines and regulates concepts like heterosexuality, homosexuality, and various gender and sexual identities. Rooted in gender and sexuality studies, queer theory seeks to deconstruct notions of what is deemed acceptable or "normal," thereby opening up new perspectives on identity and identity politics.[5]

13

Performativity

Judith Butler, a prominent scholar in queer theory, revolutionised the field with their seminal work, Gender Trouble (1990). In this text, Butler introduces the concept of performativity, arguing that gender is not an inherent or natural identity but a repeated performance of social norms. This notion, building on existing feminist studies, disrupted traditional views that perceived gender as fixed or biologically determined, highlighting instead the constructed nature of identities.

Butler's concept of performativity is essential for understanding queerness as it encompasses the fluidity, deconstruction, disruption, and rejection of norms. Rather than viewing gender and sexuality as innate traits, Butler posits that they are socially constructed through repeated and performative acts. Queer identities, therefore, emerge as performative expressions that challenge normative expectations by defying the concept of "compulsory heterosexuality."

Moreover, Butler contests binary oppositions such as male/female and heterosexual/homosexual, arguing that these categories are socially constructed and maintained through performative acts. Influenced by this critique, queer theory delves into the fluidity and complexity of identities, questioning the processes of identity construction, disrupting rigid binaries, and acknowledging a spectrum of gender and sexual expressions.

Heteronormativity and Power

Michel Foucault, another influential figure in queer theory, explored the intersections of sexuality and power in his work The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction (1976).

---

[5] https://www.masterclass.com/articles/queer-theory

Foucault argued that sexuality is embedded in power structures and that the regulation of sexual behaviour serves as a tool of social control.

Foucault's concept of "bio-power" examines how modern societies regulate and control populations through institutions such as medicine, education, and the state. Queer theorists utilise this framework to analyse how norms and regulations impact LGBTQI individuals and communities. Foucault's notion of "governmentality" emphasises the role of institutions, along with horizontal centres of power, in governing and managing life, shedding light on the regulation of sexualities.

Foucault's exploration of biopolitics, which involves the management and control of populations through various means, has significantly influenced queer theory. Queer theorists draw on Foucault's ideas to analyse how sexual identities are constructed, categorised, and controlled by societal norms and institutions.

Judith Butler further critiques the role of heteronormativity—the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm—in shaping societal expectations and power structures. Queer theory, guided by Butler's insights, investigates how heteronormativity functions as a regulatory force. To be intelligible within society, an individual must conform to gender norms; otherwise, they are rendered unreadable and considered a "developmental failure." Butler examines how this "matrix of intelligibility" can be challenged, fostering broader understandings of sexuality and gender.

Co-funded by
the European Union

Unit Two: Gender-Responsive Language

Introduction

Before stressing out the importance of gender-responsive language, express your thoughts and experiences concerning gendered language and gender stereotypes. Use the information you have learned from previous sections.

What is the importance of gender-responsive language?

Inclusivity and Representation

Gender-responsive language is the use of words and phrases (both written and orally) that acknowledge and promote gender equality. This type of language aims to create an inclusive and respectful environment towards people of all genders, ensuring everyone feels represented and valued.

Surpassing biases

Gender-responsive language also aims to overcome the gender binary and the stereotypes that derive and are created from the notion that gender is classified into two distinct, opposed to one another, and typically rigidly fixed categories: male and female, as derived from the social construct of sex. By using non-gendered language, we stop perpetuating these stereotypes.

Fostering an inclusive environment

The aim of cultivating an inclusive environment for all students - as the classroom reflects a social microcosm- serves many purposes. Firstly, it is a necessity for all students to feel safe and not marginalized due to their SOGIESC. This creates contributes to both better mental health and better academic performance.

15

Explanation of Gender-Neutral pronouns

Gender-neutral pronouns are pronouns that do not specify a person's gender. They can be used to refer to individuals who identify as non-binary (and similar identities such as genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, etc), or those whose gender is unknown or irrelevant in a given context. It is important to note that there isn't a perfect equivalence between gender identity and pronouns. Pronouns only inform us about how we should talk when referring to a specific person. For example, a non-binary person can still use binary pronouns (e.g. he/him, she/her). Many people also use a combination of pronouns (e.g. she/they) or all pronouns (she/he/they). The most common gender-neutral pronoun in English is "they." For example, instead of saying "he" or "she," you might say, "They went to the store." Other gender-neutral pronouns include "ze," "hir," and "xe".

Using gender-neutral pronouns promotes inclusivity and respect for people's identities. It's important to ask individuals which pronouns they prefer and to use those pronouns in conversation.

How to implement this type of language in the classroom and in other, extracurricular contexts

Before we delve into more practical matters, it is important to highlight the importance of having acquired a foundational understanding of gender diversity. Always have in mind that gender is a non-linear spectrum, therefore, the goal is to include everyone's gender in your language (e.g. genderqueer people) and not only men and women. A gender equality perspective is highly important for overcoming specific stereotypes that are highly ingrained in many societal aspects of everyday life.

Using Gender-Neutral Language

Language reflects how we perceive and interact with the world- therefore it creates meaning and notions. However, it is in many cases highly inflicted with stereotypes about gender that are perpetuated, and it is of high importance to use proper language in order for every person in the classroom (and other contexts) to feel validated, respected and not erased identity-wise.

It is important to take into consideration the cultural and linguistic variations and barriers and try to adapt our mother tongue towards a more inclusive direction. More thoroughly, gender- neutral language may vary across cultures and languages and sometimes in extremely gendered languages e.g. French, Greek, or German, it can be a challenge to implement these practices. However, language is an ever-changing and evolving concept, so it is vital to go along with the evolutionary process and societal changes.

A. Greeting and addressing the classroom
Start with greetings that include everyone's gender, such as "Good morning, everyone" or "Good morning to all", "Good morning class/kids" instead of the usual "Good morning, boys and girls."

B. Introduce yourself by sharing your name and pronouns and ask the students to share their own
By starting off the school year with sharing your own name and pronouns and by asking the students to share theirs with you, a welcome environment for all diversities is created.

For example:

"Good morning, everyone. I am miss/mr/mx_____and my pronouns are _____. Feel free to share your names and pronouns, if you want to."

This is a way to normalize the practice of sharing pronouns and of course respecting them. In addition to implementing this practice in the classroom, it is important to encourage other colleagues to do the same when introducing themselves to one another. At this point it is also important to stress that many students may hesitate to disclose their pronouns publicly; so, it is really crucial to be careful not to put pressure on anyone and constantly try to create a safe space for the students to share their pronouns either in public or in private, if preferred. A helpful way to encourage this practice safely is to use an index card for privacy.

C. Avoid gender assumptions

It is crucial not to assume one's gender identity based on their appearance, clothing, or other, physical characteristics (e.g. voice, hair) and traits. Gender assumption is based only on superficial elements, and it may not align with the person's identity. It can also, apart from misgendering someone, lead to exclusion, gender dysphoria and discrimination. So please, make sure to leave space and be open in any case for each student to express how they identify and what their gender is. However, always keep in mind not to expose a student publicly as this may be a child safety issue in some cases.

D. Mistakes and Correction

Do not be afraid to make a mistake regarding a student's pronouns. It is important to acknowledge and take accountability for your mistake by apologizing politely and asking again if you are not sure what pronouns a student uses. In any case, promptly correct yourself and try to not make a big issue of the mistake, which may be awkward and unnecessary. This is a proactive way to set a powerful example for your class. Always try to encourage your students and colleagues to do the same.

Example:

You incorrectly say, "Jay finished her assignment" instead of "Jay finished their assignment" (if Jay uses they/them pronouns). Immediately after realizing your mistake firmly apologize in a simple, casual manner, and get along with the rest of the teaching session:

"I'm sorry; they finished their assignment".

However, if the mistake happens in a repetitive manner, make sure to privately apologize to the student and reassure them that you'll try harder.

E. Leave room for fluidity and changes

Many people, including children and adolescents, are in the process of interrogating themselves and discovering their gender identity and expression. So, educators should be open to possible changes. For example, a student may use at a certain period of time the pronouns they/them, but they can change their minds and start using she/they or even she/her. A way to be up to date with pronouns is by sharing your own pronouns when introducing yourself. This sets a precedent and makes it easier for students to share theirs. It is useful to use Pronoun check-ins: At the beginning of the term or during group activities, include a quick check-in where students can share their names and pronouns. Do not forget to emphasize that sharing pronouns is voluntary and that everyone's identity will be respected.

Note: If a student uses, as mentioned above, mixed pronouns (e.g. they/she), ask them if they would like for you to use them interchangeably throughout the school day.

F. Inclusive Written Communication

Adapt teaching material: In written materials, instructions or assignments, try to use gender-neutral terms like "they/them", "students," or even more general terms like "learners". Always try to be conscious of gendered terms that may be present in classroom materials and curricular activities and try to provide alternatives that are more neutral regarding gender.

For example, instead of using "each student should bring his or her assignment due Tuesday," use "each student should bring their assignment due Tuesday." Furthermore, always try to be conscious of gendered terms that may be present in classroom materials and curricular activities and try to provide alternatives that are more neutral regarding gender.

Useful links

• https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/education

• UNESCO (2009) Policy guidelines on inclusion in education. Access here: https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2023/eidiki-agogi/B.%20Unesco%20policy%20guidelines%202009.pdf

• https://rm.coe.int/guidelines-for-the-use-of-language-as-a-driver-of-inclusivity/1680aec235

• https://www.goethe.de/ins/nz/en/kul/mag/21967217.html

Self-Directed Learning: Gender Responsive Language

Case study scenarios

The following activity is designed to develop teachers' self-awareness on the use of gender responsive language and its importance for the creation of a more inclusive classroom environment. Through this activity, teachers are expected to convey their own experience from an actual working environment or think carefully about such an incident and reflect on how they would believe they would handle each of the four cases.

It is strongly encouraged to implement this activity in a group, with the support of a facilitator, to generate a discussion on the participants' reactions. You may collect your findings on post its and transcribe them on paper to upload it in the platform for review.

Here are the scenarios:

Scenario 1

As a teacher at a high school, you observe that students frequently use gendered phrases during interactions, such as "boys and girls" or "you guys." You have also noticed that some students feel excluded or uncomfortable with this language.

What would you do to improve the situation and educate the students on gender inclusive language?

Scenario 2

You are a department head at a high school, and you've noticed that some classroom policies and guidelines, such as dress codes and participation rules, use language that is exclusionary and/or gender biased. For example, the dress code specifically mentions only male and female attire.

How would you handle this issue toward a more gender inclusive direction?

Scenario 3

At the school you are teaching, Sam, a transgender student, recently transitioned and has asked teachers to use their new name and pronouns (they/them). However, some teachers continue to use Sam's deadname and previous pronouns, causing them distress and dysphoria.

Would you take initiative to address the issue? If yes, discuss how you would handle it.

Scenario 4

A middle school teacher, Miss Green, on the first day of the school year is presenting herself by sharing her name and pronouns. She insists that every student shares their gender identity and pronouns in front of the class.

Discuss why this approach is problematic and express your thoughts. What would you do differently and why?

A. Video

After carefully watching the video below, express your thoughts on LGBTQI+ representation and why you think it is important, especially in the school context. Your essay should be between 500-800 words.

LGBTQ | How You See Me

Co-funded by
the European Union

Strand One: Unit three

The experience of LGBTQI+ persons in education.

In this Unit, we aim to learn more about the specific challenges faced by LGBTQI+ learners in education. It is also important to explore how history, culture, societal values and other contextual conditions impact the lived experience and school experience of LGBTQI+ youth. This element will be mainly explored through reflective exercises. Finally, we will touch upon the experiences of LGBTQI+ teachers.

Putting experiences in context: history and culture

History

For a long time, members of the LGBTQI+ community have been seen as a problem in society

For example, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) is a handbook used by doctors around the world to diagnose mental disorders. In 1952 homosexuality was classified under "sociopathic personality disturbance", and homosexuality was only fully removed from the DSM in 2013.

For a long time, homosexuality was criminalised with potential jail sentences for those engaging in same-sex sexual acts. In Europe, many countries decriminalised homosexuality in the 1980s and 1990s. To this day, 63 countries criminalise private consensual same-sex sexual activity. 12 of these countries impose the death penalty for same-sex sexual activity.

LGBTQI+ young people today may have different circumstances, but the history of how their community has been viewed still has an impact. We will discuss this more in the section on minority stress.

Exercise

Do some research on the history of LGBTQI+ rights in your country:

● Was there a movement in favour of LGBTQI+ rights in your country? Can you identify any figure of activists and/or politicians who supported LGBTQI+ rights?
● When were LGBTQI+ rights first recognised legally in your country? This could be the year when a law on civil partnerships, civil rights, marriage or non-discrimination was passed for the first time.
● Can you make a timeline of the progress of LGBTQI+ rights in your country? Is this progress linear or are there also periods of regression?
● Based on this research, how would you summarise, in one paragraph, the evolution of LGBTQI+ rights in your country, and how did social acceptance and mainstream beliefs about queerness change in relation to that?

Culture

Culture is a broad term that refers to the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.

Think about the following cultures:

- The culture of your country or region: Is it overall accepting of LGBTQI+ people or are some aspects of it hostile?
- The culture where you teach: are LGBTQI+ learners able to be open about who they are?
- The culture of your classroom: is your classroom a place where people can freely express themselves?

As a teacher, you probably can't control the culture of the country you work in, but you do have an impact on the culture of your school, and you definitely have an impact on the culture within your classroom.

You will learn more about best practices to create an inclusive culture in your classroom in Unit 2.

Exercise

How would you describe the culture of your school and of your classroom? if you are not a teacher yet, think about a school and classroom that you have attended as a student.

Think about the following:

- What is the dominant attitude towards diversity?
- What are the dominant views regarding queerness?
- Are queer identities represented in the school, through the presence of openly queer teachers and through the school curricula?
- What implicit messages do people in your school/classroom convey regarding LGBTQI+ rights and identities?

22

Exercise

Before diving into the content of the next chapter, think about the following:

- based on what you have learnt so far, what do you think are the specific challenges faced by LGBTQI+ youth in schools? Make a list.

After having read the next chapter, go back to this list and ask yourself:

- is there something in my list which was not captured in the chapter? If yes, is it something strongly culture-specific?
- would I now add any elements to my list?

Specific challenges faced by LGBTQI+ learners in education

Most LGBTQI+ people will recognise their identity during their school years. This can lead to a great amount of internal confusion, questioning and experimentation. The school environment is often going to be the place where learners spend most of their days, socialise with their peers, and build a sense of what their adult life might look like. In many cases, learners do not get to choose their school or their classroom. Nonetheless, for a queer learner having a supportive learning environment can be lifesaving. While as an adult LGBTQI+ people will have more freedom to distance themselves from unsupportive families, employers or friends, children and teens cannot protect themselves in this way. For this reason, it is crucial to create an inclusive, supportive and LGBTQI+ friendly environment in all schools.

Unfortunately, the present situation is far from this. A 2019 global study on the experiences of LGBTQI+ learners found that:

1. A significant proportion of LGBTQI+ students experience homophobic and transphobic violence in school.
2. Students who are not LGBTQI+ but are perceived not to conform to gender norms are also targets.
3. School-related homophobic and transphobic violence affects students' education, employment prospects and well-being. Students targeted are more likely to feel unsafe in school, miss classes or drop out.
4. Students who experience homophobic and transphobic violence may achieve poorer academic results than their peers.
5. Homophobic and transphobic violence has adverse effects on mental health including increased risk of anxiety, fear, stress, loneliness, loss of confidence, low self-esteem, self-harm, depression and suicide, which also adversely affect learning.[6]

In this Unit, we have articulated the challenges faced by LGBTQI+ learners in schools around the following topics:

● Bullying.
● Being in the closet.
● Coming out.
● Being outed.
● Assumptions about people's SOGIESC.
● Mental health.
● Lack of LGBTQI+ inclusive content in schools.

We will then explore more specifically the challenges faced by trans and gender-non-conforming learners in schools, including:

● Respect for their gender identities.
● Access to gendered spaces and activities.
● School uniforms and clothing.

Bullying

Unfortunately, bullying happens to many students, and it can negatively impact their ability to learn.

What is bullying?

Bullying is a form of behaviour in which someone, or a group of people, intentionally and repeatedly cause another person discomfort or injury. Bullying creates a hostile environment.

School bullying includes:

● psychological harassment (such as repeated name calling, teasing, making threats).
● physical harassment (such as hitting, kicking or intentional injuring).
● social exclusion (performed by isolating someone or spreading rumours about them).

---

[6] UNESCO (2019). *Bringing it Out in the Open: Monitoring school violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression in national and international surveys.*

Insults and verbal abuse against LGBTQI+ people create a hostile learning environment. Regardless of who is the target of the provocation, they contribute to producing an unsafe space for all learners.[7]

LGBTQI+ young people face higher levels of bullying and harassment than their non-LGBTQI+ counterparts.

Over 2019, IGLYO surveyed LGBTQI+ learners, aged 13–26, about their current or recent experiences of school in Europe. Over 17.500 young people responded, and this study is widely referenced through this Unit. According to this survey, 75,6% and 67% of respondents had witnessed bullying behaviour based on someone else's (actual or perceived) sexual orientation or gender identity and gender expression respectively. One in two LGBTQI+ respondents (54,2%) report having ever experienced bullying (broader than receiving insults or being the target of name calling) based on their assumed sexual orientation, and one in three (37%) based on their gender identity and gender expression.[8]

Despite progress in other areas, we are witnessing negative trends when it comes to LGBTQI+-phobic school bullying. According to the Fundamental Rights Agency which conducts the largest EU-wide survey of LGBTQI+ people, bullying of LGBTQI+ students has increased from 46% in 2019 to 63% in 2023. That means two out of three LGBTQI+ young people are being bullied at school.

Bullying can occur face-to-face or through mobile devices and the internet, where it is referred to as cyberbullying. This form of bullying is described as psychological harassment based on harmful online actions. It can involve being subjected to offensive social media posts, and receiving abusive or threatening emails, or instant messages. Cyberbullying also encompasses negative treatment through mobile communication, such as text messages, calls, or video clips, as well as interactions on platforms like email, chatrooms, instant messaging, and social media.[9]

Respondents of IGLYO 2019 Survey identified this type of bullying more frequently when it has been addressed to others (87%) than when it has been addressed to themselves (62%). Over 20% of respondents who had experienced bullying, reported being the target of this type of online harassment on a regular basis (quite often or very often).[10]

Being in the "closet"

Keeping your identity secret in terms of your sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics is known as being in the closet. For many young people, there is a long gap between knowing themselves about their LGBTQI+ identity and telling anyone about it. Not coming out is due to expectation that they will be rejected, or feelings of shame around their identity. This can be a very isolating experience for many young people. Telling others about your sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics is known as "coming out".

Looking at Europe, the 2023 Third LGBTQI Survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the largest EU-wide survey of LGBTQI+ people, found that 46% of respondents never openly discuss being LGBTQI+ at school, and 64% hide or disguise their

---

[7] Ávila Rodríguez, Rú (2021). *LGBTQI Inclusive Education Study*. Brussels: IGLYO, 18.

[8] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 22.

[9] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 24.

[10] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 24.

LGBTQI+ identity. In education, both as students and parents, the highest proportions of respondents experiencing discrimination in the EU are observed in Lithuania (34%), Bulgaria (31%), and Cyprus and Romania (both 30%). Conversely, the lowest proportions are in Finland (6%), the Netherlands (7%), and Sweden (9%). Similar patterns are observed for discrimination experiences in the health system.[11]

Coming out

Coming out refers to telling someone about your sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics and it can be a long process. Many LGBTQI+ young people may be out to one parent but not the other, or out to a few friends but not everyone.

It is important to know that identities can change, and someone might come out more than once.

Example:

Mel came out as a lesbian when she was 15 years old. Later, having thought more about her identity she came out again this time as bisexual at the age of 19.

Creating a supportive environment for the coming out of young people is very important. Even though every individual has the right to decide when and to whom to come out, it is also true that not being out and not being willing to come out was identified as one of the main reasons not to report incidents of LGBTQI+-phobic harassment.[12] If young people do not feel safe talking about their identity, they will not feel safe asking for help when they are targeted by bullying and harassment, which, as we have seen, is a very common experience for queer learners.

Outing

Being "outed" refers to a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics being revealed without their consent. This is unfortunately something many young LGBTQI+ people face.

Example:

Max and Jack are classmates and friends. Max tells Jack that he thinks he might be gay but isn't sure yet. Jack tells everyone in the class about Max being gay, and they start teasing Max. Max feels isolated and hurt that his friend outed him.

Outing can be extremely harmful for young people. It is important to stress that nobody should force anyone to come out or out them.

Assumptions and comments about people's SOGIESC.

Due to stereotypes about how LGBTQI+ look and act, sometimes people presume they know that someone is LGBTQI+ even if they haven't come out. This can cause a pressure on someone to declare their sexual orientation or gender identity before they are ready or comfortable to do so.

---

[11] IGLYO (2024, May 22). FRA LGBTQI Survey III Report: IGLYO's Initial Analysis.
https://www.iglyo.org/resources/fra-lgbtqi-survey-iii-initial-analysis
[12] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 26-27.

Example:

Tina hasn't figured out her own sexual orientation yet, but many of her classmates call her a lesbian and claim, "it's so obvious" and that "she should just come out already and no one would care". This makes Tina uncomfortable and sometimes she skips class to avoid hearing these comments.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that being identified as LGBTQI+ often means receiving negative comments and verbal harassment, regardless of whether the person targeted by these verbal attacks is indeed LGBTQI+ and/or is out to their peers. According to the *LGBTQI Inclusive Education Study*, the vast majority of respondents had witnessed negative comments related to people's sexual orientation (83,4%) or gender identity and gender expression (71,4%), either sometimes or on a regular basis (quite often or very often). Moreover, over half the respondents (67,2%) have been verbally harassed, with almost a quarter (24%) experiencing such verbal harassment on a regular basis. Trans women have directly experienced negative comments (as addressee) most frequently, based on both their (actual or perceived) sexual orientation (86,5%) and gender identity (87,2%). Gay cis men have also experienced a high number of negative comments directly, based on their sexual orientation (65,3%).[13]

Mental health

Mental health refers to emotional, psychological and social well-being. Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.

Having good mental health does not mean that you are constantly happy and having a good day every day, but that you are able to move through bad days and handle stress.

LGBTQI+ young people are at a higher risk of experiencing mental health problems than other young people as a result of:

- Prejudice and discrimination resulting from (actual or perceived) sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Negative responses and rejection (feared or experienced) from friends, family and services.
- Pressure to conform to gendered norms and expectations of heterosexuality.
- Not coming out as a result of these pressures and fear of experiencing homophobia, biphobia or transphobia.[14]

Poor mental health refers to a variety of problems such as

- depression,
- anxiety,
- suicidal ideation.

According to the 2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People, 41% of LGBTQI+ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year — and

26

---

[13] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 18.

[14] LGBT Youth Scotland (2017). *Supporting Transgender Young People: guidance for schools in Scotland,* 5.

young people who are transgender, nonbinary, and/or people of colour reported higher rates than their peers.[15]

Poor mental health can also be associated with behaviours such

- self-harm,
- alcohol abuse,
- drug abuse.

While abuse issues can impact anyone, it is more common among people who are LGBTQI+. This may be linked to LGBTQI+ people's experience of discrimination and stigmatisation.

Eating disorders

Eating disorders are a range of mental conditions in which there is a persistent disturbance of eating behaviour and impairment of physical or mental health.

87% of LGBTQI+ young people reported being dissatisfied with their body[16], which per se has a negative impact on overall mental health but can also lead to developing an eating disorder to feel more in control of what your body looks like. Moreover, a side effect of anorexia in teens is delayed puberty, and the bodily changes associated with puberty can be a great source of stress and anxiety for youth who does not identify with their sex assigned at birth. In fact, transgender college students are over four times more likely than their cisgender counterparts to report an eating disorder diagnosis.[17]

Finally, suffering from an eating disorder can increase the overall vulnerability of young people. In fact, LGBTQI+ youth who have ever been diagnosed with an eating disorder have nearly four times greater odds of attempting suicide in the past year compared to those who have never suspected nor had an eating disorder diagnosis.[18]

Minority stress

Minority stress describes high levels of stress faced by members or stigmatised minority groups. Due to the negative experiences LGBTQI+ people face, they experience a constant level of stress anticipating the next negative reaction.

Due to prejudices in society against LGBTQI+ people, a negative reaction can happen at any time. Constantly preparing yourself for a potential negative response creates a continuous experience of stress and anxiety.

[15] The Trevor Project (2023). *2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People*, 4. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/assets/static/05_TREVOR05_2023survey.pdf

[16] The Trevor Project (January 2023). *Research Brief: LGBTQ Youth and Body Dissatisfaction*, 1. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/January_2023_Research_Brief_Final.pdf

[17] Diemer, E. W., Grant, J. D., Munn-Chernoff, M. A., Patterson, D. A., & Duncan, A. E. (2015). *Gender Identity, sexual orientation, and eating-related pathology in a national sample of college students*. Journal of Adolescent Health, 57(2), 144–149. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2015.03.003

[18] The Trevor Project (February 2022). *Research Brief: Eating Disorders among LGBTQ Youth,* 2. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Embargoed_Feb-2022-Research-Brief.pdf

Example

Joan is a lesbian; she is out to all of her friends and family who are accepting of her. She is going to cosmetic school where she is out to her classmates and has not experienced any bullying. One day Joan gets the bus to class with her girlfriend, Martha. On the bus a passenger starts yelling at Joan and Martha calling them names and intimidating them. Despite an accepting family and school environment, Joan shows up to class shaken and finds it hard to concentrate.

Minority stress may account for some higher rates of physical illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, and immune dysfunction although more research is needed.[19]

Lack of LGBTQI+ inclusive content in schools

Having LGBTQI+ representation in school curricula is a very important measure to make students feel included, safe and seen in the classroom.

Educational curricula and learning resources should offer all students unbiased and accurate information about sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and variations in sex characteristics. Misleading or biased content, which often suggests these topics as abnormal, along with the absence of positive LGBTQI+ representation, can have harmful effects on all learners.[20]

While support from school staff and the inclusion of topics related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and variations in sex characteristics have grown over the past decade, there remains a scarcity of high-quality educational materials addressing these issues.

28

To create inclusive learning environments, teachers must be trained to effectively deliver this content in the classroom. Their understanding and confidence in these subjects will influence the overall school atmosphere and significantly impact the experiences of LGBTQI+ students.[21]

According to the *LGBTQI Inclusive Education Study*:

- Most people never received information on sexual orientation (52,6%), gender identity and gender expression (72,9%) or variations in sex characteristics in schools (40,6%).
- Less than 1 in 5 respondents reported having been taught positive representations of LGBTQI+ people.
- Over 40% of intersex people received information on sex characteristics, but this information was mainly negative for most respondents (78%).
- Over 7 in 10 respondents felt that their teachers were not open to discuss LGBTQI+ issues in schools.[22]

The Third LGBTQI Survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, registered some progress in addressing LGBTQI+ issues in schools:

---

[19] Flentje, A., Heck, N. C., Brennan, J. M., & Meyer, I. H. (2020). The relationship between minority stress and biological outcomes: A systematic review. Journal of behavioural medicine, 43(5), 673–694. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-019-00120-6
[20] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 30.
[21] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 29.
[22] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 29.

- In 2019, 47% of respondents aged 15-17 reported that their school never addressed LGBTQI+ issues, compared to 35% in 2023.
- The percentage of 15-17-year-olds respondents who said their education addressed these issues positively increased from 13% in 2019 to 17% in 2023.

Even though these positive trends are encouraging, the reality remains that less than 1 in 5 students in Europe are exposed to positive representation of LGBTQI+ issues in schools.

Specific challenges faced by trans and gender-non-conforming learners in schools

Many trans, non-binary, and gender-non-conforming individuals become aware of their gender identity before turning 18. Supporting and acknowledging students' gender identities in schools is essential to safeguarding their rights to education, health, and well-being. However, throughout Europe, gender recognition processes for children and adolescents in educational environments remain limited. This absence contributes to social exclusion and stigma, leads to higher school dropout rates or poorer academic performance, and increases the risk of mental health challenges among trans youth.[23]

A study of more than 300 LGBTQI+ young people in Scotland showed that:

- 88% of those who had experienced transphobic bullying believed that it had negatively impacted their education;
- 52% of transgender young people thought that homophobia, biphobia or transphobia had affected their employment opportunities;
- LGBTQI+ young people are more likely to be confident about reporting homophobia and biphobia than about reporting transphobia;
- 37% of transgender young people had left education as a result of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia in the learning environment;
- 77% of transgender young people had experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying in school.[24]

The 2020 study *Legal Recognition in the EU: The journeys of trans people towards full equality* involved interviews with more than 1,000 trans people. The research focused, among other topics, on the experiences of trans people in education.

The key findings of the study were:

1. most transgender persons become aware of transgender identity before the age of 18, so awareness takes place during the school period.
2. Most hide their identity due to fear, anxiety and discomfort, a fear of bullying and a lack of support.
3. A high percentage of respondents report being bullied, harassed and experiencing violence, as well as a general non-acceptance by peers.
4. There is a lack of inclusive education. Though there is presently more focus in schools on identity issues than in past, there is a reported nonexistence of information in schools on trans identities.
5. Many trans persons report an inability to use basic hygiene facilities in schools.

[23] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 39.
[24] LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017, 4.

29

6. Non-acceptance and bullying can lead to school disengagement and Early School Leaving.[25]

Because of the specific vulnerabilities faced by trans and gender-non-conforming learners in schools, we have dedicated part of this unit to understanding their challenges.

Respect for their gender identities

Some trans and gender-non-conforming learners may wish to socially transition while in school. Social transition may include adopting a different name from their legal one or adopting new pronouns. In this case, it is important that teachers, students and school staff respect this and use the correct names and pronouns for trans and gender-non-conforming learners. Beyond this, it is also important that the correct name, and not the legal name, is used in school records and school-related documentation.

Though, respect of gender identity and gender expression in educational settings seems low:

● Only 1 in 10 trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming learners reported that their gender identities were always respected by their teachers and other school staff. By contrast, 38,9% reported that their gender identity was never or rarely respected.[26]
● Less than 1 in 10 trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people reported that their gender identities were always respected in school-related documentation.[27]

Access to gendered spaces and activities

Access to school toilets and changing rooms plays a crucial role in shaping young people's school experiences. All students, including trans youth, should feel at ease when using these facilities. However, some trans students feel uncomfortable using the toilets or changing rooms that align with their gender identity, fearing teasing or bullying. In changing rooms, they might be anxious about being seen by others while changing. As a result, they may prefer to use accessible toilets, which offer more privacy. Due to discomfort with using school toilets, some trans students choose to go home to use the restroom or avoid drinking during the school day. This can negatively affect their health, attendance, and academic performance.[28]

Additionally, some trans students find physical education classes particularly challenging due to concerns about their gender identity being accepted or worries about their physical appearance.[29]

Therefore, it is clear that providing non-gendered facilities such as toilers and changing rooms in schools is crucial to ensure the safety, well-being and health of trans students. Nonetheless, having exclusively gendered facilities is still the norm in Europe.

Most respondents to IGLYO 2019 Survey on LGBTQI+ Inclusive Education stated that toilets were segregated by 'male' and 'female' (85%). Only 4,9% of respondents said that they were not segregated by gender and 5,4% that they had, at least, a non-gendered option. 3,7% of participants reported that the school had enabled a specific toilet they could go to (such as a

---

[25] European Commission (2020) *Legal Recognition in the EU: The journey of trans people towards full equality*. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7341d588-ddd8-11ea-adf7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en.

[26] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 39.

[27] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 39.

[28] LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017, 17.

[29] LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017, 20.

school staff toilet or a toilet for people specific mobility needs). When asked about school changing rooms and showers, most respondents (82,3%) reported that they were segregated by 'male' and 'female' and that they could not use facilities in line with their gender identity. Only 10,6% respondents said that they could use facilities in line with their gender identity, and 2,2% that the school had non-gendered spaces.[30]

School uniforms and clothing

Many schools have a dress code or uniform policy, and while there are various arguments for and against uniforms, it is ultimately up to each school to establish its own guidelines. However, requiring trans students to wear clothing that doesn't align with their gender identity can be distressing for them.[31]

Furthermore, a trans boy or non-binary student who has developed unwanted breasts may use a chest binder to flatten their chest, which may require wearing loose-fitting shirts or sweatshirts. This should be taken into account when establishing a dress code or uniform policy. Though binders can cause discomfort, such as shortness of breath or pain during physical activities, they can also have a positive impact on a young person's mental well-being. It is important for school staff to allow students to make their own decisions about wearing binders and support their participation in school activities.[32]

LGBTQI+ teachers

A school environment which is hostile to LGBTQI+ people will not only have an effect on learners but also on teachers.

Teachers who are openly queer can face overt or covert discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination based on sexual orientation in the field of employment is still not prohibited in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Lichtenstein, Russia, Switzerland and Turkey.[33] Nonetheless, covert discrimination can be difficult to prove from a legal standpoint.

Working in a hostile, discriminatory and harassing environment, or witnessing LGBTQI+-phobic bullying towards learners, can have great negative consequences on the mental health of queer teachers and increase their minority stress. In the case that teachers do not come out to their colleagues or students because of fear of discrimination, harassment or repercussions, this need to hide their identity due to a safety concern can further increase their stress. In fact, schools should implement LGBTQI+-friendly policies and practices not only for the safety and wellbeing of learners, but also of teachers.

It is incredibly important for students to be exposed to queer role models from a young age. Having an openly queer teachers can demonstrate to students that being queer is something normal, that LGBTQI+ do regular jobs and live regular lives, and that becoming an accomplished and fulfilled queer adult is possible. This creates a virtuous circle in creating a more accepting and inclusive environment in schools.

---

[30] Ávila Rodríguez, 2021, 43.

[31] LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017, 18-19.

[32] LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017, 20.

[33] ILGA-Europe. *Rainbow Map 2024: Equality and Non-discrimination*. https://rainbowmap.ilga-europe.org/categories/equality-non-discrimination/

Self-directed learning Unit 3: The Experience of LGBTQI+ Persons in Education

In this Unit, you have learned more about the specific challenges which LGBTQI+ learners encounter in school settings. But which policies, initiatives and projects are currently being implemented to ensure that school environments are more inclusive and supportive of queer learners?

IGLYO, the world's leading LGBTQI youth and student network, has recently launched its LGBTQI Inclusive Education Database, a searchable online tool that incorporates good practices of LGBTQI inclusive education in areas such as school curricula, teacher training, anti-discrimination and gender affirming policies, and school participation. You can also read this press release on this page.

Some national governments in the Council of Europe have already taken significant measures to make education systems more inclusive for those of us who are LGBTQI. Over the last decade, IGLYO — The LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation, has worked on benchmarking legal and policy standards on inclusive education, and has come across laws, policies and programmes that try to create safer and more inclusive education systems for LGBTQI youth.

With all the information we have gathered, IGLYO has now developed a free online LGBTQI Inclusive Education database that can be used by policymakers, civil society organisations, education professionals, youth organisations and youth activists. With this tool, we want to make sure everyone has access to some good practices that would help in protecting and promoting the rights of LGBTQI youth in education.

Accessible in several languages, the IGLYO Education Database also provides access to original resources and where they come from: national governments, civil society (either LGBTQI organisations, teachers and parents' associations, or youth groups), and international and regional institutions and organisations.

Among others, you'll find good practices in the form of legislation and policies, inclusive curricula from formal or non-formal education, teacher training materials, awareness raising campaigns, trans and intersex specific resources, or resources on concrete themes, like comprehensive sexuality education. The database will be updated on a regular basis, so reach out to the IGLYO policy team if you have any resources that could be included.

Exercise

Browse the database and research the following:

- Are any of the good practices listed from your country?

    - If yes, were you aware of these good practices?

    - If yes, have you made use of these good practices or do you plan to do it in the future?

- If no, research some good practices which could be easily applied in your context, and which would be beneficial to overcome your challenges.