Needs for Education about LGBT Issues by

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Organizations

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Summary

From a worldwide assessment to explore the needs for a Global Association for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) Education, it became clear all respondents want to exchange their good practices. However, to be able to focus on educating mainstream organizations about sexual diversity, several challenges need to be faced. LGBT grassroots organizations have a great need for basic capacity building. They do have first hand experience with discrimination but usually lack the educational expertise to translate such knowledge into effective interventions for mainstream target groups. They are not used to specify their objectives or to monitor effect of educational interventions, which makes it unclear whether they are effective. Creating a transnational learning process by discussing discrimination processes, setting specific objectives and comparing the effect of interventions would be useful. To enable this, local educators will need to transcend their cultural and personal views.

Introduction

In 1998, Amnesty International organized a human rights conference as a side event of the Gay Games in Amsterdam. One of the workshops focuses on education. A number of speakers and participants from across the world shared information and views on how education

about LGBT issues towards the general public was done in their respective countries. While most of the participants expected education about LGBT issues to be very different across cultures, it appeared all activists shared common experiences and could learn from each other. The main recommendation of the workshop was to create a global network for exchange and to raise the quality of the work.

During the years 2003-2005, the author of this article did an assessment to explore the needs for such a network. This article answers the question which needs were found. It will focus on LGBT organizations, because most mainstream organizations did not develop needs in this area yet.

This article starts with a discussion of the concept of 'education' and the goals of the needs assessment. Then it will go into the method of the assessment. The results are presented in two categories: needs for content and needs for strategy. The article ends with some conclusions and recommendations.

Education about LGBT Issues and Goals for an Assessment

The concept of 'education' can be interpreted in a variety of ways. It may be taken as formal education in a public or private institute or as informal education, like learning on the job. It may be interpreted as a top down process, involving an expert teacher and lay students, or as an interactive process in which all participants exchange information and skills. 'Education' may be interpreted as signifying a specific school system, or as an abstract concept for teaching and learning.

In the context of the needs assessment at hand, we wanted to focus on teaching the general public about sexual diversity and discrimination of LGBT people. Teaching students in formal schools could be one way. In Western Europe, gay and lesbian volunteers from grassroots organizations who offer awareness sessions to high school students is the dominant model. Training teachers is a logical next step, which has been taken in several European Union (EU) countries. This was the perspective that was used when the needs assessment started.

There does not seems to be much research on these specific forms of education about LGBT issues. The few available articles relating to the subject are found in US journals, like The Journal of Homosexuality and The Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education and some books. Most of the articles refer to experiences of gay and lesbian teachers (Garber, 1994) and to activities on University Colleges (Sanlo, Rankin & Schoenberg 2002). A few articles focus on evaluation of education sessions in colleges and find some positive effects on attitudes of heterosexual students after awareness panel sessions (Morin, 1974; Green, Dixon & Gold-Neill 1993). At the same time, it becomes clear from the literature, that there is not a single teaching model in the US. The Gay/Straight Alliances (GSA), which are school-based student clubs, is the dominant model of organization in the US. GSA's seem to be unique to the US and do not primarily focus at education of heterosexual peers or teachers.

One European article describes a summary of a pre-test evaluation of a draft manual for teachers about combating homophobia in a multicultural context (Bakker & Vanwesenbeeck 2005). The scientific literature on specific education about LGBT issues in schools seems to be limited.

Much more information can be found on homophobia, both on documenting negative behaviours or attitudes (for example, see the overview in Herek, 1998) and on theorizing the

concept of 'homophobia' (for example, Adam, 1998). Some of this literature offers pointers towards determinants that might be important factors in effective education. Such as finding that interpersonal contact between heterosexuals and homosexuals may lead to more nuanced or positive attitudes ((Herek & Glunt, 1993).

There may be two reasons for the lack of information and literature specifically relating to education about LGBT issues. One is the lack of attention for sexual diversity by mainstream schools and training institutes in most countries. The other is probably the lack of access of LGBT grassroots organizations to mainstream organizations.

In the Netherlands, were I live, there may be more opportunities for LGBT organizations to access schools than in other countries. This has given the author opportunity to reflect on specific objectives for education about LGBT issues and about strategies to access schools.

A main objective for education about sexual diversity and discrimination is to diminish discrimination of LGBT people and to increase tolerance towards a variety of lifestyles. To be able to measure effects of education and training curricula, Empowerment Lifestyle Services (consultancy agency of the author) and the Rutgers Nisso Groep (the Dutch Institute for Social Sexuological Research) have explored possible instruments. The available survey batteries, which are properly validated, come from the United States. These question batteries usually focus on documenting negative attitudes about homosexuality. However, in the Netherlands most of these survey questions are not adequate, because they ask for relatively extreme negative attitudes, which are not that prevalent in the general Dutch population. This is explains why the Rutgers Nisso Groep constructed a new survey instrument that focuses on two scales: social distance and social support. This means that we specified the goals of education about LGBT

issues to (1) diminishing social distance and (2) increasing social support towards people who express LGBT feelings of behaviours.

One of the goals of the needs assessment was to explore how educational organizations and LGBT organizations set their objectives, how they intend to reach their educational objectives and how they monitor effects of their interventions.

There is a variety of reasons why mainstream institutes like schools do not want to give attention to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender expression and why they don't want to offer access to LGBT grassroots organizations. Another goal of the needs assessment was to explore which opportunities they may be, if they are good practices and what we can learn from pitfalls that have been overcome by organizations.

The final and more implicit goals of the needs assessment were to identify people and organizations, which might be interested in becoming a stakeholder of a future network for exchange and collaboration.

Research Method

Since it was clear there is probably a great variety in the ways mainstream and LGBT organizations deal with education, it was going to be difficult to develop an adequate survey questionnaire. It was decided to make the needs assessment a general exploration by doing interviews with respondents who are interested in education and who, preferably, have at least some experience in implementing education about LGBT issues.

To develop an interview format, some trial interviews were done with volunteer LGBT education groups in Europe. For these interviews, a questionnaire, which was developed to study the work of Dutch education volunteer groups, was used.

These interviews were very difficult and tiresome because this questionnaire was not suitable for non-Dutch groups. It was an elaborate questionnaire, tailored to the almost professional way Northwestern education groups' work. For groups with less experience, most questions were difficult to answer, simply because they never considered them. For example, asking which groups are targeted and which objectives are set, is difficult and even demoralizing when the education activity consists of giving students (who ask for this) a tour around the building of the LGBT organization and having a nice conversation afterwards.

After these trial interviews, it was clear that the scope of a proper needs assessment should be broader and the questions very general. The final format consisted of two sets of each four basic questions. One question set was for organizations with experience with education, the other for organizations without any experience.

Organizations *without* education experience were asked these three questions:

1. Resistance - What are the kinds of resistance you experience against LGBT issues?
2. Opportunities - What would be opportunities for education in your country?
3. Change - If change were possible, what would you aim for?

   Organizations *with* education experience were asked these three questions:

   1. Strategy - How do you work (marketing mix)?
   2. Content - What are the main messages of your education?
   3. Effect - What kind of effects do you see of your education?

All interviews were closed with a question on network needs: which support would be useful for the respondent or their organization.

In practice, the questions were more starting points for an open discussion than closed research questions. When the respondents had a problem answering a question, an answer was not

pressed for. If possible, the issue could be addressed in a different way later in the conversation. When the respondents seemed stimulated by a question, more detailed questions were asked.

It often became clear, language and cultural concepts about discrimination and education were sometimes so different, that it was needed to question whether the respondent understood the questions, or the author understood the answer. The more interviews the author did, the more he learned to assume a structurally "wondering" attitude, asking for more clarification again and again until he felt sure he got the point.

In Latin America, many respondents did not speak English, and the author did not speak Spanish or Portuguese (although he understands about 70%). In most of these interviews, there was a translator present. However, the translations were usually not literal and often cultural ways of communication and local settings were challenges to a mutual clear understanding. An example of this learning process:

> When I asked the question: "What kind of education do you do?", a Latin American respondent might answer: "We have a broad range of initiatives with many partners". Then the respondent would go into detail about all the partners and about the general aims of the collaboration. This was told with an obvious pride of the fact that the LGBT organization was able to be an accepted partner in such networks. Since I was curious about the actual interventions, I usually asked on about that. But often, the translator did not really understand what I wanted to know more than what already was said. Later, I found out that often the partnerships the respondents talked about consisted mainly of informal conversations. They were no formal educational interventions. This was difficult to discover, partly because the respondent did not like to admit that, partly because the respondent (and the native translator) saw the informal conversations as interventions in themselves and even as an informal form of education itself. On the process level, the translator could not understand or accept why I asked such 'offensive' questions (offensive, because they to him it felt as a depreciation of the good work that was being done).

To prevent misunderstandings, all the interview reports were typed out and the respondents were asked to correct them. The report of interviews with respondents that did not understand English was translated in Spanish or Portuguese. After correction, the interview

reports were put on the website in order to make the whole process clear to everyone. Some respondents, however, did not react on this check at all. When they did not respond to several appeals, these reports were published anyway, but with a note that the text was not checked and the sole responsibility of the author.

Since there was no funding for this needs assessment, the interviews were organized to fit into the free time and financial limits of the author. In 2003 and 2004, interviews were done in Italy, Finland, Sweden, France, the UK and Austria. In late 2004 and early 2005, the author used a sabbatical for interviews in the global South. In this period 14 cities in 9 countries (India, South Africa, Namibia, Australia, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Peru and Argentina) were visited and about 45 interviews were conducted. In the spring and summer of 2005, some extra interviews in other parts of the world were done by e-mail, at a conference in Bangkok and in New York. This article is based on the results of about 60 interviews.

The respondents were recruited by way of personal contacts and the snowball method (Vogt, 1999; Atkinson & Flint, 2001). This method entailed making initial contacts in every country with one or two respondents who had extensive networks and who were willing to introduce the author to other respondents. Once on location, the original respondents introduced the author to others, who in turn introduced him to others again. This is called snowballing. The advantage of the method is that it offers easy access to expert respondents. The disadvantage is the risk that contacts remain limited to certain social groups. In this case, many initial contacts were provided by HIVOS, an international development organization that facilitates extensive work on combating AIDS among men who have sex with men. The author had to spend extra attention to reach out to mainstream educators and lesbian and transgender respondents.

In Europe, most of the respondents were voluntary of professional educators or trainers who worked specifically on LGBT issues. Most of these focused on schools. Many respondents in the South were activists from LGBT organizations and AIDS Service Organizations. It was attempted to balance their involvement and promote parity by actively looking for lesbian and transgender activists and for researchers, family planning and sex education organizations. On occasion there were opportunities to discuss matters with (national and local) government officials and representatives from other sectors, like lawyers and police officers. All respondents had in common they had an interest in education about LGBT issues.

Results: Needs for the Content of Education

In this section, I will focus on the experiences of respondents of LGBT grassroots organizations. General organizations generally know very little about LGBT issues. Many mainstream organizations don't think it necessary to educate about LGBT issues. Even if they are positive about attention to LGBT issues, they often find it hard to define what the content of education could be. In almost all cases were I interviewed respondents of mainstream organizations (universities, high schools, civil servants, sex education organizations, AIDS service organizations), the advice of LGBT grassroots organizations was called for.

My first and most obvious conclusion from the interviews with LGBT respondents was the relative lack of expertise about education strategies. Local LGBT organizations have a lot of experience with the problems they face in daily life. This experience is what they would like to transfer through their education to the general public, accompanied with messages of human rights and tolerance. But for them, it appeared to be difficult to translate this general aim into specific educational objectives.

From the need assessment it became clear most of the respondents were not ready to discuss specific educational objectives. Questions about goals and objectives were answered in a very general way: the most common terms were "to combat homophobia", or "to promote respect to sexual diversity". These goals were taken to be clear. But when the discussion evolved, it became clear such formulations are not self-evident. Different ideas about what "homosexuality" and "sexual diversity" actually means, determine the implicit goals of education. Furthermore, cultural and political contexts guide the areas where organizations want to do education and some more specific objectives.

In Europe and in North America "sexual orientation identities" are central in combating discrimination of people with non-heterosexual feelings. Assuming an identity and combating the norm of heterosexuality as the dominant system of oppression is central to the struggle in these parts of the world. This is, for example, what happens in panel awareness sessions: gay and lesbian volunteers tell their coming-out story, show they are homosexual and not ashamed of it and engage in a discussion about (heterosexual) norms and values with students. This focus on a self-confident gay or lesbian identity strongly influences the goals of education. The gay volunteers tend to focuses on sexual liberation and acceptance of their homosexual identity and the lesbian volunteers tend to focus more on gender rights and criticizing the heterosexual norm. In the educational strategies, the perspective of gay activists is usually more dominant than that of the lesbian activists. One aspect of this dominance is that Western LGB organizations usually speak of "combating homophobia".

On a global scale it is important to take into account how this concept of homophobia is interpreted in different parts of the world. The concept of homophobia is mainly a Western

concept. Western, because the concept presupposes there exists a global identity of homosexuality against which one can have a phobia.

In the perspective of most Latin Americans, it is not very relevant to talk about sexual orientation in the context of identity (Parker, 1999; Cacéres, Pecheny & Terto Junior, 2003). In Latin American culture, two concepts are more important: machismo and sexualities. The role pattern between macho men and feminine women is magnified and played with. Sex is acted out and defines whether one is powerful or submissive. In this context, women are in submission to macho men and people who display non-heterosexual feelings or atypical gender behaviour are degraded. At the same time, sexuality and erotic play remain an important ways of communication and of defining power and pleasure. Although within the heteronormative context, there is a lot of space for experimentation and pleasure that is not heterosexual or limited to typical gender roles (Parker, 1999). Some respondents call these "fluid sexualities".
For many Latin American respondents, the aim of education is make people aware of these fluid sexualities and make them more accepted. In their context this can only be done by taking the battle between the sexes into account.

In Asia, most countries have age-old cultures and social arrangements that are not fluid in any way. One of the most important aspects in these societies is the importance of mutual respect, and especially respect to people who are higher in the hierarchy. India, with its caste system, is the most outstanding example of this (Narrain, 2005).

Most of these traditional social systems are organized in a hetero-normative way. People who display non-heterosexual feelings or atypical gender behaviour can fall into two categories: either they commit themselves to a low rated social class or cast which accepts and defines their behaviour, or they become complete outcasts (Sexualities, Genders and Rights in Asia, 2005). In

most Asian countries there are groups of transgender people who have a traditional way of existence, but are still fundamentally part of the lower strata of society (Agrawal, 1997). In Asia, sexuality is traditionally not a taboo, although there are rules and restrictions connected to the social hierarchy (Manderson & Jolly, 1997). Conservative Asian governments that hearken back to the "original culture", still take over British Colonial negative views on sexuality, including laws forbidding sodomy (Narrain, 2005). Here too, prescribed gender roles are important (Bao, 2003).

Culturally sensitive educational interventions in Asia would benefit more from connecting to the general value of mutual respect than from promoting sexual liberation or sexual identities.

Another important aspect is the position of gender and of transgendered people in LGBT education. In parts of the world where sexual orientation discrimination is the main issue, and where combating hetero-normativity in general does not seem essential, like Europe, people with atypical gender behaviour fall out of the analysis and the movement. As a consequence, gender issues are neglected in education about LGBT issues. It is important to take into account that transgender issues cannot be interpreted as one single identity, but should be viewed as a continuum of feelings and identities.

During the assessment, it became clear respondents in the global South appreciated the initial focus on schools. But their own needs were more focussed on education of other professional groups, which had a more direct impact on the daily lives of LGBT adults, like police officers and health professionals. Thus, the scope of the needs assessment was broadened to encompass any target group the respondents mentioned.

Focusing on the media was especially important in countries where discrimination is rampant and where there is not access to other sectors. Respondents say that correcting negative

images of LGBT people in the media is the most important issue in those countries. Since journalists are often misinformed or prejudiced, they need to be trained. However, when journalists are informed and allied, editors of mass media usually censor items that are not extreme enough. In some countries pressure of the government to publish negative messages about LGBT people is paramount (Afrol News, 2006).

A second major priority was to focus on the police forces. In countries with more serious discrimination like India, the police forces are one of the main abusers of LGBT people. Here the issue is stopping this abuse. In countries with less discrimination, the police are more seen as a protector of national and international human rights including sexual rights and the focus of education is more on training officers to provide sensitive services.

The AIDS epidemic has brought the position of health services into view. Stigma of LGBT people prevents them from getting access to medicine and to good health services. In countries where the basic battle for HIV medication is won, respondents had more space to promote better health services for LGBT people. In other cases, the focus was on the political battle for free medication or on securing medication in whatever other possible way. Immediately following the interventions targeted specifically at HIV and AIDS, education towards other health services becomes an issue.

Teaching about LGBT issues in schools, or even promoting a safer working and learning environment for LGBT teachers and students, is not the highest priority in most countries. The access to schools and young people is simply too difficult. Many government authorities, schools and parents still consider teaching about LGBT issues as promoting non-heterosexual behaviour and paedophilia. Still, in some countries in the South, there is limited access to schools. This is usually very integrated in more general sex and AIDS education. This has its positive and

negative aspects. Positive is that an integrated approach reaches all students, the risk is that regular teachers and students find it difficult to deal with the specific aspects of LGBT issues and that the subject is treated in such a superficial way that it becomes ineffective.

The few examples of more specific LGBT education when targeting professionals focus in the global South usually more on basic human rights, especially in the context of citizenship. In the Northwestern countries of Europe, specific LGBT education for professionals focuses more on the quality of services.

Although the history, background and focus of LGBT organizations movements vary, we can see a global movement towards more inclusiveness. The exchange of news and experiences through the Internet and conferences stimulate a sense of a global LGBT community, although such a concept is by no means unproblematic. One main area of discussion is how to label this community or these communities.

To most LGBT organizations, it is clear the concepts of "gay and lesbian" are limiting. There are a lot of attempts to more be inclusive, and we will find the acronyms GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender), LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender), TLGB (transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual), LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex). The order of the letters is never accidental: they signify the priority organizations give to combat discrimination of the most vulnerable groups. Still, the disadvantage of these attempts is that they still categorize.

The concept 'queer' is the odd one in the acronyms. For some, the word 'queer' signifies a refusal to label oneself, as it were an 'anti-identity'. Other use 'queer' as a new umbrella term for all non-heterosexual identified individuals. Some don't want to use the word because it sounds radical, and others use it to nuance their own position. One of the most recent additions is

'genderqueer', used by people who don't like to be classified as male, female or transgender because their preference is to keep their gender ambiguous.

In other areas, there is an attempt to even more inclusiveness by using the concept of "sexual minorities". Some respondents object to this, because it has the disadvantage of putting the community in a victim position and it gives the false impression that heterosexually identified people cannot engage in homosexual encounters. This is especially a problem in parts of the world were large percentages of (at least the male) population engages in homosexual encounters.

The most inclusive concept is "sexual diversity". It implies recognition of a continuum of feelings and identities and it integrates heterosexual behaviour. However, the disadvantage is that is rather vague since for heterosexuals it may not be immediately clear what the word refers to. Next to that, some gay and lesbian organizations are afraid that a too wide focus on for example general sex education will dilute the effort to combat specific forms of discrimination.

All this is relevant to education as well, because underlying the labelling discussion are presumptions about who LGBT people are, why they are marginalized and which strategies should be used to create change. Educators who use "gay and lesbian" implicitly focus on creating acceptance of specific identities. Educators who use acronyms do the same, but try to create to inclusiveness. Educators who focus on (sexual) diversity aim to increase tolerance for more variation, either with or without labels. Each choice has consequences for the specific objectives and content of education. But most educators have not yet reached the level were they actively translate their general view on emancipation to their education activities. Concrete education activities are usually done with implicit objectives and matter of hand methods.

One thing all educators have in common is the dominance of heterosexual norms, even when these are mediated through cultures. However, this shared background does not automatically mean LGBT organizations see the need for close collaboration. Raising the quality of education – for example by doing research and comparing effects – was recognized by respondents as a need, but never suggested by themselves. All LGBT organizations are very proud of their achievements, but few respondents mentioned any flaws in their current educational work or a need to enhance their interventions. Instead, most respondents offered to promote their own good practices to be used by others. Often, they stressed the value of locally developed tools and the need to disseminate them. With the benefit of an international overview, this focus seems quite limited. The authors experience with exchange of tools shows tools from one country are seldom taken over by other countries, especially when cultures differ. However, the exchange becomes useful when focussing on the more abstract notion of combating (hetero) normativity or supporting tolerance of diversity.

For example, challenging the media and training journalists is often done after monitoring negative reports in the press and complaining about a lack of integrity to the relevant authorities. The detailed way to do this will vary from country to country. A culturally sensitive strategy will depend, among other things, on the (in)dependence of the media, the availability of a Journalist Integrity Committee, the possibility of open confrontation or the need for covert personal contacts, and on whom to contact. But on a more abstract and supranational level, the analysis of how to develop such strategy and discussing the question when this is most effective, becomes more relevant.

One important issue is how to make the leap from confronting mainstream organizations with their inadequate performance towards LGBT people, to establishing a positive partnership

with them. For example, the media can use LGBT organizations as sources of news and as a knowledge base.

Another issue is the question of concrete goals and objectives. Goals may seem so obvious on a local level they don't need to be elaborated into specific and measurable objectives. Looking at these issues from a supranational level, it becomes possible to compare different goals and effects. This may prompt local educators to re-evaluate their own objectives and reformulate them in order to be more specific and effective.

Results: Needs for Education Strategy

The lack of educational expertise in LGBT grassroots organizations should be seen in a broader context of their organizational and strategic development. LGBT organizations have their grassroots experience but generally not much experience in education.

Many LGBT organizations in the global South did not make a distinction between educating mainstream organizations on one hand, and educating their own constituency about rights and respect on the other hand. Even general capacity building of their grassroots organization was seen as part of "education".

This was not just confusion about the scope of the word "education". Many respondents refused to make a distinction, claiming the diversification between "internal" education and "external" education and capacity building was a threat to their organization. Without direct liaisons and empowerment of disenfranchised LGBT people their lobby and education of mainstream groups would be without soul. Without organizational capacity, they could not build these constituencies, obtain access to mainstream organizations or receive funding or manage projects. Without "internal" education, they could not make their own constituency aware of

their own rights, respectful of diversity within their own organization or ready to become a lobbyist or trainer of mainstream organizations.

At the same time, many local LGBT organizations were struggling to maintain an existence and to get basic contacts with mainstream organizations. When LGBT organizations were able to establish contacts with mainstream organizations, it was often by collecting evidence about maltreatment of LGBT individuals, filing complaints, establishing a dialogue and obtaining access to do some education or training. But such a confronting strategy often fails somewhere along the process, resulting in halted progress. Usually LGBT organizations need partnerships with mainstream allies to get to the actual education stage. In practice, many successful LGBT organizations collaborate with sex education organizations to provide specific LGBT education in a more general sex education or human rights education context.

Reviewing this, we distinguish a five-step process in the development of LGBT grassroots organizations:

1. Creating a basic LGBT grassroots organization. This often starts as a relatively small group of activists who choose general aims and target groups. "Education" is not yet an issue.

2. Creating a wider constituency. The core group sustaining the organization establishes links with LGBT people from a diversity of backgrounds. One aim is to empower the less self-conscious people to improve their situation; another aim is to change society into a friendlier environment. In order to do, the LGBT organization documents human rights violations and discrimination. Incidentally, discriminating organizations are challenged, which can be seen as a first attempt to informal education. Usually there will be no expressed educational needs at this stage.

3. Building organizational capacity. The organization establishes a 'collective memory' by education its own members about its history, achievements and strategy. Thus, it becomes a 'learning organization'. The internal democracy and informal services by volunteers become well organized and reach a minimum level of continuity and quality. The organization can now offer regular informal services like safe spaces, social activities, protest meetings, advocacy and informal education like story telling awareness sessions or balanced dialogues. Educational needs will be focussed at basic capacity building: how to manage a democratic structure and volunteer work.

4. Building the capacity of the organization. The organization starts to develop projects and learns how to access funding, account for spending, to hire and to manage paid staff, to offer formal services like counselling, HIV-prevention and buddy work. Most of the services are still focussed at the own constituency, so education is geared to this. Education needs will be focussed at capacity building on a professional level, like how to generate funds and how to manage projects.

5. Building a professional reputation of the organization. Now that the organization has the experience and space to shift its focus mainly to society as a whole, it becomes a social agent of change. To be able to fulfil this role, the LGBT organizations must to establish formal and long-term positive partnerships with mainstream organizations. One aspect of these partnerships is that the LGBT organization can offer services to mainstream organizations, like education and training. In this stage, the educational needs become increasingly professional. The organization wants to learn how to establish and maintain partnerships, how to balance its specific LGBT perspective with broader perspectives of mainstream organizations and how to be more effective.

This is a generalized process description. In reality, LGBT organizations do not have the benefit of an overview.

Furthermore, individuals make up every organization. There may be organizations which are on the whole in 'stage 3', but they may have one or a few activist who get invited for lectures or a training. But without structural support of the organization for such external activities, these remain personal achievements. They get lost when these particular activists leave the organization.

Conclusions

LGBT organizations have their grassroots experience but generally not much experience in education. A lot of learning has to be done in the areas of professional development of LGBT organizations and in forging partnerships with mainstream organizations.

The concept of education is quite fuzzy. Some activists think education is about providing information for empowerment and transformation about LGBT life to their constituency. Others think the general public should be a target group and creating more awareness and tolerance should be the aim. Adult educators may think more systematically about how to create attitudinal and behavioural change in specific sectors.

Most educators do not state concrete objectives for their education about LGBT issues. They seem to think this is not necessary, because general aims like "combating discrimination" are obvious to them. In reality, these are not obvious at all. Not defining objectives or monitoring the effect makes it impossible to enhance educational interventions. For example, it is not clear whether promoting a strong gay or lesbian identity is helpful in combating discrimination, or whether promoting tolerance for diversity is the thing to go for.

Behind the general aims, LGBT activists have implicit goals and objectives that depend on their personal and cultural views. In their view, the "way we do things here" is the only possible way. They usually do not realize there may be other options.

Recommendations

From this rapid needs assessment, a few recommendations can be formulated. First, LGBT organizations in the global South express a great need for capacity building on a range of issues. Support for such capacity building is necessary. At the same time, it is important to recognize the development stage of the organization as a whole and tailor support to systematic further development. Second, when we discuss education about LGBT issues or sexual diversity, it is necessary to define what we exactly are talking about. We need to define who we want to teach about what, how we want to teach and in which context. Major distinctions to be kept into mind are 'internal' education (empowerment and capacity building of own constituencies) versus 'external' education (combating discrimination in the general public) and formal ways of educations versus informal ways. Third, building a general framework that describes hetero-normativity and related general processes of exclusion can be helpful to provide a context to set clearer and trans-culturally applicable objectives. Such objectives, when the effect of interventions is monitored scientifically, can be important tools to enhance the quality of education. The discussion about a 'trans-cultural framework' may as well provide an opportunity to discuss which aspects of education about sexual diversity is truly universal and which is culturally specific. Finally, international collaboration on education about LGBT issues can be useful for inspiration, to avoid pitfalls, for mutual support, and to access expertise and funds. However, true international collaboration requires the participants to take a mental leap. They

have to realize others may be active in different places and circumstances, but that they have solved similar problems. The lessons to be learned are not in the colour or design of an educational brochure, moreover, they are in the analysis and objectives from which it was developed.

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