

Intervention on raising LGBT issues, in the plenary synthesis of the workshops, Thursday 27-11-2008 of the International Conference on Education, Geneva

A participant presented himself as a representative of a transnational donor organization and asked whether he could ask a question to the chair, get an answer and then have a short comment on this. The chair agreed on this.

The speaker went on to praise the attention to the discussion about inclusion of marginalized groups. However, he felt that one group, which approximately makes up 5 to 6% of the child and adolescent population, was neglected. He wanted to know if the chairman if lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students have the right to be just as included as disabled students, poor students, female students and cultural minorities.

The chairman thanked him and proceeded to give the word to the next speaker. However, the first speaker intervened and asked if he could get an answer like promised. The chairman said he was not in a position to go into this, because it would be the responsibility of the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE). He then gave the floor to Mrs. Acedo, the representative of the IBE. Mrs. Acedo said that already in the preparatory regional meetings for this conference, a lot of attention has been given to children with HIV/AIDS.

The chair then gave the floor to the next speaker, ignoring the protest of the first speaker that he was promised the right to a final comment.

Later, in the final debate, another representative of the transnational donor organization took the floor and apologized for the interventions of the first speaker. He said he hoped the respectable position of the transnational donor organization in this forum would be restored and not considered a disreputable organization.

Later, after the session, a few things happened:

- Mrs. Acedo said in a private communication that she had not been paying attention to the proceedings and this was the reason for her comments which were not to the point.
- In a personal communication, the formal representative of the transnational donor organization said that the intervention may have damaged the lobbying process he was working on during the conference.
- The representative of the transnational donor organization went to the first speaker, explained that he had consulted with the board of the representative of the transnational donor organization and had felt obliged to make the comment. He also said that the diplomatic mistake of the first speaker would not be held against him personally and there would be no repercussions for his position.
- Mr. Dankmeijer, director of GALE (The Global Alliance for LGBT Education), in a private communication, told the representative of the transnational donor organization that his comments could be taken by the audience as that the donor organization thinks LGBT issues are disreputable and asked whether this was the intention. The representative of the transnational donor organization denied this was the intention and said his comment was just meant to correct that the first speaker was speaking on behalf of the donor organization and they did not like the way that the chair and IBE were put on the spot, on behalf of the donor organization. He said to be sorry if his words were not chosen careful enough.

The names of the speaker and the donor organization have been omitted in this communication because to prevent damaging future alliances and personal repercussions.