



Bias-based bullying/Cyberbullying and online safety/Teachers

World Anti-Bullying Forum  
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## Presentation on the UNIQUE needs assessment at the World Anti-Bullying Forum (2 November 2021)

On behalf of the UNIQUE partnership, Peter Dankmeijer (GALE) did a presentation of the needs assessment of the UNIQUE project at the World Anti-Bullying Forum in Stockholm, on 2 November 2021. The full results were not yet available, but preliminary conclusions were presented.

- Take coming-out into account when doing research on LGBTIQ bullying; results will vary among students who come out and who do not, and the percentage of being open is an indicator of school safety.
- Rejection of non-conforming gender expression seems to be a main trigger for negative treatment
- LGBTIQ are not one group; each subgroup is rejected in different and more/less serious ways; transgenders, non-conforming gay boys and bisexuals are treated worst
- There are substantial differences between countries; a country-specific approach is needed
- VET teachers are often “technicians”, they lack skills to support 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like client-friendliness
- A school-only approach is likely to fail, as LGBTIQ discrimination is part of a wider public attitude

Preliminary recommendations were:

- Create awareness that sexual and gender diversity is an issue in VET and in society that needs improvement
- Include heteronormativity in training, explain why non-conforming expressions tend to be stigmatized and how these exclusion mechanisms can be countered
- Focus not only on knowledge of VET teacher-ambassadors about LGBTIQ, but train them also in how to teach social skills and client-friendly attitudes and behavior

- Link the action in VET institutions to a wider societal approach

After the presentation, there were a number of questions from the audience. One interesting question was what specific competence should be trained in VET teacher training. Dankmeijer answered he thinks training about discrimination of LGBTIQ should have the broad perspective of discrimination mechanisms in general, but without ignoring specific LGBTIQ issues. He thinks these mechanisms should especially focus on the involved emotions: how to deal with negative emotions arising from the frustration of students and teachers with people who are not complying with the norm of heterosexuality. This is not specific only for people who label themselves homosexual or transsexual. It affects all people, and the underlying mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination are even wider than the consequences of the norm of heterosexuality. The focus should not be on information about what LGBTIQ is, but on the negative emotions that people experience when other people are different from them or hold different values.

Another question was about the need to be contextually sensitive. Dankmeijer confirmed how important this. The UNIQUE needs assessment clearly showed country differences. He made three qualifying remarks. The first was that he thinks heteronormativity is a constant in almost all societies, but at the same time there are always regional and local differences in how this is enacted and how people's attitudes are considering it. The second was that he learned from the UNIQUE project how important it is to differentiate between levels of explicitness in talking about homophobia and transphobia. In many contexts, people have a resistance against talking explicitly about homophobia and transphobia, and this taboo is very different from the treatment of racism or handicap, which are much easier to talk about. The third remark was about the way we view bullying. Everybody is against bullying, but there is a huge disagreement on the strategies how to combat it. Dankmeijer notes this is not a politically neutral discussion. For example, the choice between disciplinary or nonviolent / restorative interventions is highly charged. Are schools meant to coerce students into obedience or to help develop own choices even when holders of authority don't agree with their views? Of course, teaching about LGBTIQ issues and freedom of sexual and gender choices is often even more controversial. Do teachers and schools avoid such discussions out of fear of consequences, or do they take social responsibility? These are inherently political choices, even though most schools would deny that. We need to recognize that teaching skills like empathy, cooperation and nonviolent communication are often considered to be "leftist" or even "woke" themes. The antibullying movement and schools needs to recognize that teaching such values and skills is in fact a progressive choice and one therefore cannot claim to be "neutral".

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