Guidelines for Inclusive Education

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

IGLYO   OBESSU

Preamble

This publication is an updated version of the *Guidelines for an LGBTQ-Inclusive Education,* first published by IGLYO in partnership with OBESSU in 2007.

Evidence from IGLYO's members as well as research from various countries worldwide has shown a continued need for school systems to implement inclusive policies and activities across Europe. School bullying based on real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression – referred to as homophobic and transphobic bullying - constitutes a violation of the human right to education. Research commissioned by IGLYO in 2013 highlights the fact that homophobic and transphobic bullying not only impacts individuals while in formal education, but can also have longer term impacts on an individual's career chances, both through recruitment and in the workplace.[1]

As with the earlier version of these guidelines, the current document was developed and updated during a joint IGLYO-OBESSU study session. *Standing together: action and advocacy against bullying* took place at the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre in Budapest in March 2014, bringing together over 35 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth and student activists and school student activists from across Europe to develop strategies and methods to create the most inclusive educational environment possible.

These guidelines supplement IGLYO's other educational materials, and they should be used in combination with IGLYO's Teacher's guide to inclusive education, as well as IGLYO's *Minimum standards to combat homophobic and transphobic bullying*[2]. The guidelines also supplement OBESSU's *Guidelines on social inclusion in education*[3], and provide detailed, in-depth information on creating a more inclusive educational environment for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

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2. IGLYO, 2014. Minimum standards to combat homophobic and transphobic bullying. Available at: http://bit.ly/1AtHH7a
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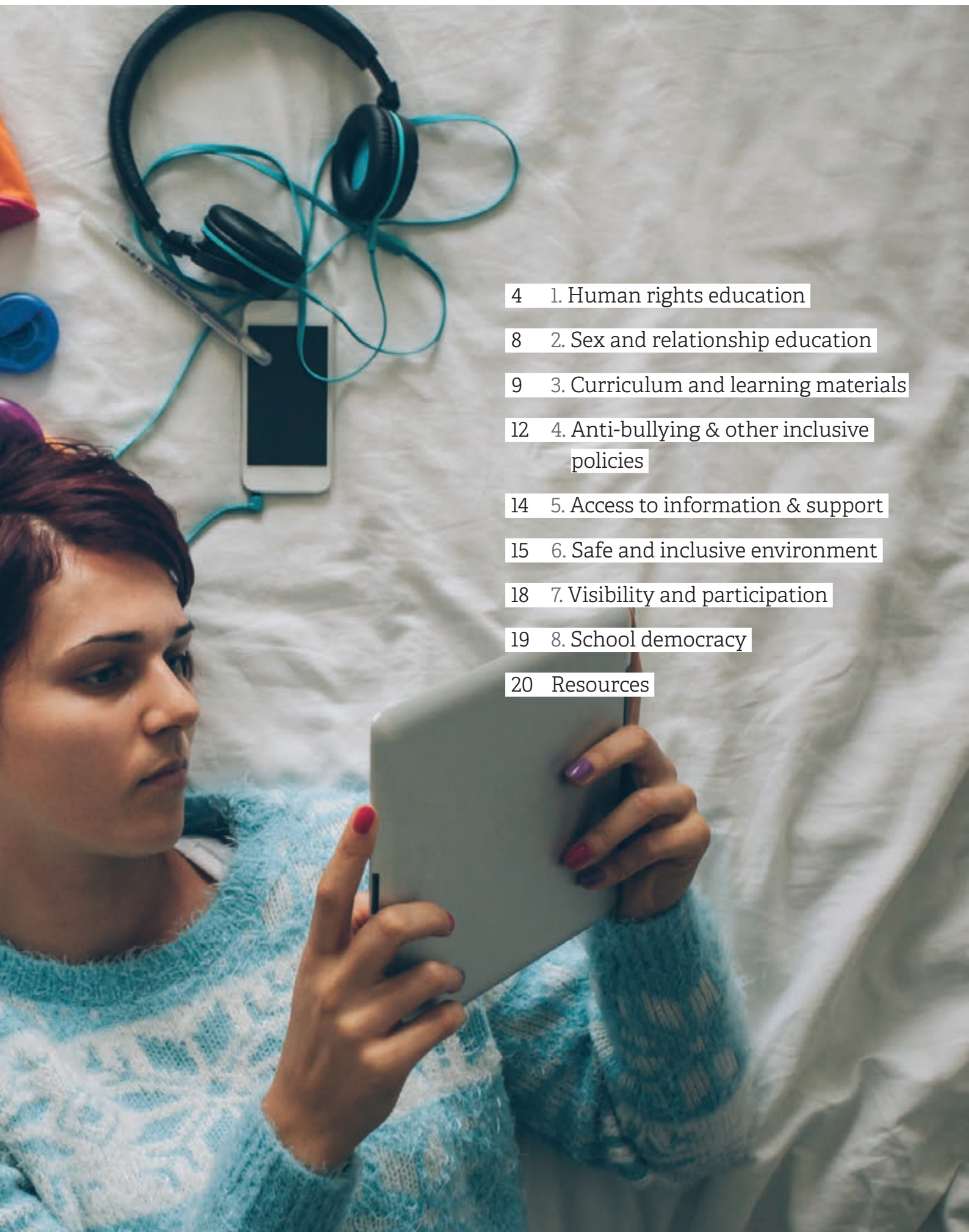
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1. Human rights education

Students throughout Europe should receive comprehensive education about their fundamental rights through human rights education. Such an educational component is crucial to raise awareness about the rights to equality, freedom from discrimination, and freedom from harassment. In some national curricula, citizenship or civic education already includes human rights education.

The articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are relevant to all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. However, many of the human rights outlined in the Declaration are routinely denied to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people, both by governments and governmental institutions such as schools.

In using the context of human rights, we recognise that all people should have and deserve the same rights, even if they are different from each other. This approach is helpful when discussing not only rights for LGBTQ people, but also rights for people of different ethnicities, abilities, genders and others with marginalised identities.

Human rights should be integrated both in the educational approach, such as teaching methods and school ethos, and in the educational content; teachers should provide instruction on human rights.

By integrating human rights education through both what is taught and how it is taught, schools can create a culture of respect for and appreciation of diversity.

– Be explicit about how the human rights framework interacts with subjects like women's emancipation, slavery, or genocide.

– Focus on human rights as a central part of citizenship education.

– School student councils have a role to play in making sure that their school's ethos respects the human rights of all who are associated with it. It might have an equality policy for students and teachers, but what about non-teaching staff like cleaners or administrators? Are their human rights being upheld?

Human rights training should be required within teacher training. This training should be refreshed and updated through regular continuing professional development. Such training should not be exclusive to teachers, but should also be provided for other members of the school community such as principals and administrators, and should contain information on how to reduce the occurrence of homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Human rights training should always cover issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Local and national LGBTQ organisations are often willing to help as experts during trainings.

Everyone has the right to education.

Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

2. Sex and relationship education

Sex and relationship education should be mandatory and should explore the emotional side of sex in addition to the physical aspects. Lessons should focus on relationships, rather than only reproductive functions and health risks.

These discussions should remain diverse with regards to gender. Doing so ensures that all students understand their sexual health, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Teachers should be sensitive to the fact that not all students are heterosexual/straight and not all students' gender identity matches with the sex they were assigned at birth, yet all students need comprehensive sex education.

Sex and relationship education should:

– Focus on feelings and the emotions associated with relationships. This could be done by looking at 'case studies' of other young people to start the discussion if students are reluctant to start to talk about their own feelings.

– Discuss sex and being safe in broader terms than procreative sex. 'Sex' should never mean just the kind of sex that could result in a pregnancy: that approach encourages the idea that other kinds of sex are unusual and therefore strange or unnatural.

– Talk about the feelings, worries and desires that 'people' have, rather than how 'girls' and 'boys' feel. This prevents perpetuating gender stereotypes and enables students to feel comfortable with their emotions and feelings.

– Openly talk with all students about sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as relationships for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people. These discussions can provide another opportunity to deliver human rights education.

Such education must be based on facts rather than biased beliefs.

Information about relationships involving diverse sexual orientations and gender identities as well as safer sex should be taught to all students, not just lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer students. Students should never be outed in the classroom, as if information was solely for a particular student due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Furthermore, all students should be made aware of the fact that LGBTQ people have relationships with emotions and feelings, and can, in an increasing number of countries, get married and have families, just like everyone else.

It should be highlighted that not all people are heterosexual and not all people's experienced gender, or gender identity, matches with the sex they were assigned at birth. Furthermore, teachers and students should be aware that gender expression may not fall within the gender stereotypes of male and female. There must be open discussion and recognition of sexual and gender diversity.

Most importantly, teachers should be trained to teach sexual education in a constructive way and to guide discussions in the aforementioned directions. Sexual education should be taught with an agreement of confidentiality, and students should feel empowered to ask questions, perhaps anonymously.

3. Curriculum and learning materials

All curricular materials should include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer perspectives and contain inclusive materials for all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, both as part of generic materials, and if possible, as standalone materials which specifically deal with LGBTQ issues.

Including non-mainstream sexual orientations and gender identities in the classroom and across all curricular materials extends beyond sex and emotional education. All identities should be mentioned in all subjects. Mentioning diversity works against the assumption that all people are straight and that their gender identity matches with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Attention should be given to instances where an author or historical figure is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer.

When discussing families, avoid using gendered terms like 'mother' and 'father'. Using inclusive language and terms like 'parents', 'guardians' or 'carers' includes everyone and does not implicitly favour a specific type of family. This is beneficial to a large part of the student body, and in particular to students from non-traditional families such as those whose guardians are divorced, have died, are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer, etc.

All curricular materials should feature diverse types of couples, families and individuals, such as mathematical problems, in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

School systems should endeavour to revise their curricular materials regularly, with input from teachers, students, and nongovernmental organisations. They should also revise their materials in accordance with standards from the Council of Europe.

Everyone has the right to education, without discrimination on the basis of, and taking into account, their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Principle 16, Yogyakarta Principles (2007).

4. Anti-bullying & other inclusive policies

Homophobic and transphobic bullying should be dealt with in the same way any other identity-based bullying would be. IGLYO's Minimum standards to combat homophobic and transphobic bullying serve as a starting point with regards to combatting bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression[4]. The Minimum Standards should be used in parallel with these guidelines. IGLYO's minimum standards are summarised opposite.

1. Policies and training

Educational institutions must mandate diversity and/or anti-bullying policies or strategies that explicitly include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression; all staff including teachers and administrators must receive training in order to have the competence to discuss topics and issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

2. Student support systems

All students and particularly those exposed to homophobic or transphobic bullying must have access to sufficient support services.

3. Systematic data collection

Statistical data on homophobic and transphobic bullying in educational institutions must be collected systematically with the aim of identifying and monitoring the nature, extent and impact of bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

4. Multilevel policies and approach

Anti-bullying policies and strategies that are inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression must be pursued by all relevant stakeholders locally, as well as regionally, nationally and internationally.

Furthermore, anti-bullying policies should include a clear procedure/plan of action to be followed whenever an incident is reported. This plan of action must prioritise making the bullied person safe, and should make clear that there are consequences for anyone who continues to carry out bullying behaviour after being warned. These consequences should include working with the individual to identify the reasons for bullying behaviour and in extreme cases might include removal from the school environment.

Reports of bullying should be taken seriously, and focus should be placed on changing the bullying behaviour. Often, the student who is bullied is told to change their behaviour, or avoid expressing their sexual orientation or gender identity. Such responses are inappropriate and fail to support the bullied student.

Anti-bullying education should be included in schooling and curricula from the very first stages. There are many ways to include anti-bullying education in the curriculum.

– Dedicate some time to talk about why people are targeted. This prompt can form the beginning of a discussion about difference in society, and lead to human rights education.

– In Art classes, students can address anti-bullying themes by creating anti-bullying and pro-diversity images, which can be exhibited.

– Some countries nominate a special day or week in the calendar as 'anti-bullying week'. If yours does, think about events or actions that students and schools could prepare to mark this occasion. If it doesn't, start an anti-bullying week in your school.

Cooperation between the school, students and their parents is necessary to establish the school's responsibility to ensure the safety of all students at the school, the students' responsibility not to bully, and the parents' responsibility to report their children's wellbeing.

4. Minimum Standards to combat homophobic and transphobic bullying. IGLYO, 2014.

5. Access to information and support

There are several areas where it is important that students can access both information and support on issues regarding sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

These are:

– Counselling,

– Community support (such as LGBTQ youth groups),

– Internet & printed materials, and

– Other forms of friendly media such as newspapers.

Schools should include LGBTQ materials in their library. These might be inclusive and unbiased books, or books which deal specifically with LGBTQ issues.

The books should be easily accessible, and not hidden on high-up shelves or in adult sections. They should also be available to take home, as some students might want to read them in private.

LGBTQ materials such as posters and leaflets advertising relevant youth groups and services should be displayed on school noticeboards.

There should be a key trusted person students can consult and speak to regarding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity; the trusted person should be available during school hours, as well as outside of normal hours (for example, through email or social media). Nonetheless, all teachers should have the ability and competence to act as a trusted person that students can turn to if they feel the need to speak to a teacher.

A 'trusted person' is someone freely approachable by any member of the school community, who will take people seriously and treat their problems with confidentiality. This person and their contact details or office hours should be advertised widely.

Any events or campaigns run within the school should acknowledge, include and respect all students, especially those who are discriminated against.

Schools should provide support for self-organised groups, such clubs and societies, at the initiative of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer student, teachers, and parents.

Every school should regularly remind the entire school community about inclusive policies in a variety of ways and through a variety of resources. Students should be involved in the creation of all such resources.

Internet-based educational information on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression issues must be accessible and not blocked by safety filters.

There is a significant difference between educational material about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and pornography. Schools should not ban exploring sexuality in a constructive and educational way (e.g. blocking access to websites supporting LGBTQ young people). For a lot of pupils, school might be the only safe place where they can get more information.

If websites for LGBTQ organisations or information sites are blocked, ask teachers, librarians or the technical team to unblock them, and explain why. It is a basic right of students to access educational information in a safe environment.

Moreover, the school or its information centre should keep a database of useful websites dealing with issues of discrimination and prejudice. These websites should be used by teachers when planning their lessons so that they use accurate and relevant information.

6. Safe and inclusive environment

Schools must be safe and inclusive spaces for all students. Intimidation or discrimination of any sort, including homophobia and transphobia should not be tolerated, with penalties for those who do not respect school safety. Parents and all members of the school community should be informed about safety.

Schools should be publicly and openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer-friendly. A school's inclusiveness should be evident in the publicity and materials produced by the school.

Schools should ensure that the right of students, staff and all members of the school community to privacy and confidentiality is enforced. Schools should allow students, teachers and other staff to keep their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression private unless they choose otherwise. Confidentiality is especially important when a student comes out to a member of staff.

Ensuring facilities such as toilets and changing rooms are gender-neutral, as well as providing gender-neutral uniforms is important in order to ensure all students are included. Alternatively, students should be allowed to use the facilities and wear the uniform they prefer and with which they feel most comfortable.

When it comes to physical education, avoid splitting students up into 'boys' and 'girls' as this can be difficult for students who do not identify with either gender or students whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth.

Schools should set up spaces where students can talk openly about themselves without fear of being judged by others. One way of doing this could be to run support groups at which a trained trusted person, ombudsperson, mediator, graduate or counsellor is present to facilitate a space where students can freely express themselves.

Hateful graffiti and other expressions of hatred should be immediately removed

Hateful graffiti on a school wall offers a good opportunity to discuss homophobia and transphobia and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people with students. However, if it is not removed quickly, the implicit message will become 'this is part of our school', and 'this is tolerated'. It is highly hurtful to LGBTQ young people and other LGBTQ members of the school community to see publicly displayed hatred. Like anti-Semitic or racist messages, the school community must not tolerate it.

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Parents and all members of the school community should be informed about safety.

7. Visibility and participation

Visibility and participation means recognising the existence of and including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people in society. Within a school, participation is achieved through ensuring that people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are included and represented in all school structures *(also see 3. Curriculum and learning materials).*

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer students should be visible in campaigns run by the student council, especially any campaign that deals with issues of diversity. Members of the student council should be made aware of their responsibility to multiply and spread values of diversity to other areas of their lives, especially those where they have influence, such as youth groups.

Schools should run LGBTQ awareness events to facilitate discussion and improve all students' understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression issues. These events could include workshops from external organisations and talks from external speakers. Such events could be debates, discussions, workshops or celebration events. They could be scheduled to coincide with a local or national Pride festival, or could occur in reaction to coverage of sexual orientation or gender identity issues in the media.

If there has not been an LGBTQ awareness event at your school for a long time, take the initiative to organise one. Contact your local LGBTQ organisation for support, or get in touch with IGLYO.

Visibility of school policies encourages the entire school community to adhere to and discuss the values of the school. Encourage participation: if a group of students are unhappy about a certain aspect of the school's policy, discuss it publicly. It is important that the students who are unhappy have a voice in any visibility campaign.

– Involvement will bring a feeling of commitment, ownership and caring about one's school.

– Caring about one's school will lead to engaging more with it, and with education more widely—inside and outside of the class.

– More engagement will, in the end, mean a more enjoyable school experience for all involved—as well as better results.

The school should use language that is inclusive for all individuals, without making assumptions about people's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Some ways of doing so are listed below.

– Refer to learners as 'students' or 'people' rather than as 'boys and girls' or 'ladies and gentlemen.' Using this language ensures that no one is excluded from the discourse. Allow students to select and use the gender pronoun they prefer.

– Avoid gender-normative statements such as 'football is a man's game', 'boys don't cry', or 'science isn't for girls'.

– Avoid asking about 'boyfriends' or 'girlfriends', as doing so makes assumptions about the person you are asking. Instead, use neutral terms such as 'partner'.

8. School democracy

Schools should encourage students to take initiatives and be involved in the development of their policies.

Students should be empowered to be involved in all decision-making, policy matters and activities that concern them.

By involving students in decision-making processes, their interests will be best represented. Somebody else speaking for them will never truly serve the students' interests. It's in the best interest of the school, as well as the students and the parents to ensure the students' issues are heard and worked on.

Schools should recognise, hear and respect student councils and students' unions, in their school, city, region, and country. Those councils and unions should work to represent all students, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Members of the school community should empower school student councils and students' unions to lobby educational institutions (such educational authorities and ministries of education) for the mainstreamed inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people and issues.

Schools should support students in implementing projects or initiatives. Such support ensures that the interests of students are given appropriate attention when the school itself does not have capacity or expertise around an issue.

All school students should equally have the democratic right to play an active role in their school council and classroom. There should be an equal number of students and teachers in the councils. This must include being allowed to meet together with other students, to speak at meetings and to vote. Schools should actively engage with their school students' councils, support their work and provide places for meetings.
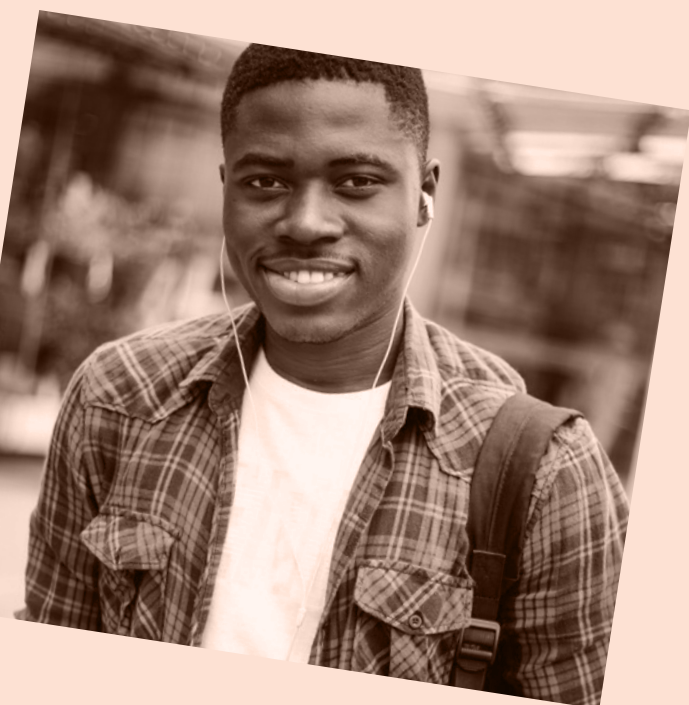
Resources

This is a list of useful resources when working on LGBTQ inclusion in education. We are very much aware of the different regional and national contexts, and strongly encourage you to contact your local or national LGBTQ organisations — many of these organisations are listed on the IGLYO website. They will be able to point you to relevant information in your language.

OFFICIAL WEBSITES

IGLYO
IGLYO's official website contains links to previous events, reports, local and national member organisations, and current activities. You can also download the present guidelines, as well as the Minimum standards to combat homophobic and transphobic bullying. www.iglyo.com

OBESSU
The website of OBESSU allows you to get in touch with your national school student union, and learn about initiatives by and for school students in Europe. www.obessu.org

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

The Council of Europe
The Council of Europe publishes very useful resources for non-formal education on Human Rights. Look for the lists of activities in the Compass guide. Available in English, French, Russian and Arabic. www.eycb.coe.int/compass

The Human Rights Action Center
Looking for something to start a discussion on Human Rights, in the class- room or elsewhere? The Human Rights Action Center has a great video online. www. humanrightsactioncenter.org

The Yogyakarta Principles
The Yogyakarta Principles show how each article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to sexual orientation and gender identity. Available in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese. www. yogyakartaprinciples.org

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

ANSO
ANSO, the Association of Nordic LGBTQ Student Organisations, published a leaflet on fighting heteronormativity in higher education. www.anso.dk

BeLonG To
BeLonG To, a national organisation in Ireland to support LGBT young people. www.belongto.org

COC Netherlands
COC Netherlands, an LGBT rights organisation that campaigns against homophobia and transphobia in schools and promotes the introduction of Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) in schools in the Netherlands. www.coc.nl/engels

The Global Alliance for LGBT Education
The Global Alliance for LGBT Education is a growing global network of people working on LGBT issues in education. Available in English, French and Spanish. www.lgbt-education.info

LGBT Youth Scotland
LGBT Youth Scotland, an LGBT youth and community organisation who have worked on education and anti bullying through training, resources and campaigns. www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/schools-and-education

RFSL Ungdom
RFSL Ungdom is the Swedish Youth Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer (LGBTQ) Rights. Their Break the Norm Toolkit provides information and activities on norm criticism and norm critical approaches. www.rfslungdom.se/sites/default/files/media/breakthenorm_0.pdf

Schools Out!
Also in the UK, Schools Out! makes a great Student Toolkit for inclusion in schools. www.schools-out.org.uk/STK

Stonewall
Stonewall, a UK-based charity, campaigns against homophobic bullying through leaflets, a video and a DVD. www.stonewall.org.uk/ education_for_all

IGLYO

International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organisation

OBESSU

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions.

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