Unsafe Gay Days

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Homophobic action encompasses hate speech, and refusing a marginalisation and violence against learners who identify as part of the LGBTQI community.

We interviewed a number of learners who have found more than 70 percent of lesbian and gay learners of both gender and of all races did not feel safe at school played or pretended to be ill to avoid a homophobic school environment.

No further research has been done in South Africa, but it would be correct to assume that they are bullied or belittled. This would display similar behaviour.

This is problematic, worrying and unacceptable because it creates a systemic situation in which the same reasons for pupils purely because of the gender of their partners or how they identify or are identified by others.

The situation is accompanied by a lack of trust, which is why it is important that teachers teach on sexual and gender diversity.

This lack of trust occurs despite a strong focus on transformation, social justice and inclusion in the post-apartheid curriculum. There has been a strong focus on teaching gender and race and sexual and gender differences in the classroom.

In this way, the focus of all our work has been to ensure that there is a strong emphasis on teaching the values and practices associated with diversity and inclusion.

Our intervention training research was in the form of interactive workshops to ensure that students can feel safe and supported.

The teachers reported that they were able to feel safe and supported in the classroom. They were able to talk about activities that were useful for practice in the classroom and that they were also useful for their colleagues.

Beyond the training, we are busy developing a resource kit that will be used within our School of Education to equip our students to be better teachers.

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of our partners for their contributions to the training of teachers.

On the final day of the training, a participant approached the researchers and said: “They sit with us now.” He, a gay student, told us we made him feel unalone in his classroom. He also identified that the school had changed over the past few years.

This project has trained pre-service and in-service teachers in an attempt to reduce homophobia in schools with the ultimate goal being that schools and society would be more inclusive and respectful of diverse sexual orientation, would have the freedom to enjoy full citizenship.

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