

UNDERSTAND ME! MOM, DAD, TEACHER



Conspectus for training centers for teachers of trade schools and technical schools, including teachers of vocational and general subjects



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1. Introduction

The purpose of this handout is to provide tools and materials for training institutions that prepare vocational school teachers of vocational schools and vocational education institutions to work with LGBT+ individuals. The training focuses on equipping vocational school teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to create a safe, supportive and equal environment for adult learners, including active learners.

- Presentation of basic definitions and terms related to LGBT+ issues.
- Enable teachers to understand the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Provide practical tips for organizing anti-discrimination events.
- Provide tools for having open and constructive conversations with students about LGBT+ issues.
- Presentation of methods to address discrimination and exclusion.
- Identify the main challenges faced by co-workers or those in the professional environment of LGBT+ people and direct them to appropriate sources of support.
- Discuss peer mediation techniques.
- Emphasize the importance of a proactive approach to the topic of diversity and "otherness."
- Drawing attention to the most common mistakes made by those close to LGBT+ people.
- Presentation of strategies for learning self-acceptance and assertiveness for learners.

Training intended for implementation by:

- Training institutions and educational organizations,
- Teacher training centers for vocational schools,
- Entities providing courses for teachers of vocational schools of vocational schools and

Training Objective:

- To prepare vocational school teachers to work with LGBT+ students in continuing education institutions and vocational and continuing education schools.



- Developing competence in supporting diversity, anti-discrimination and empathetic communication.
- Creating model practices to implement in working with adult learners.
- Increase vocational school teachers' knowledge of the LGBT+ community and understanding of the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Developing skills to support adult LGBT+ vocational students in the school environment, including recognizing their needs and responding to homophobic behavior.
- Equipping vocational school teachers with practical tools and methods to talk to students and colleagues about LGBT+ issues.
- Strengthening the competence of vocational school teachers in peer mediation and in promoting self-acceptance and assertiveness among vocational school students.
- Contribute to the creation of a safe, open and inclusive school space that fosters acceptance and respect for diversity.

Expected results after the training:

- Understand key concepts related to the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Increase the ability to recognize and respond to homophobic behavior at school.
- Gain practical tools to talk to students and colleagues about LGBT+ issues.
- Developing peer mediation skills and emotional support for adult LGBT+ vocational students.
- Better understanding of the challenges faced by LGBT+ co-workers and the ability to refer them to appropriate forms of support.



Implementation of the above workshop results will contribute to:

- Creating a more open, safe and supportive school environment for all vocational students, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Reduce levels of discrimination and exclusion in schools.
- Strengthen bonds between teachers, students and colleagues through open and honest communication.
- Promote equality, acceptance and respect in the school community, which will positively affect the emotional and social development of all vocational students.

Survey : Appendix 1

(duration 15 min)



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2. The importance of support for LGBT+ people at school

Support for LGBT+ people at school is extremely important for several key reasons:

- Safety and well-being of vocational school students: LGBT+ students are often at risk of discrimination, violence and exclusion. Providing support and creating a safe school environment helps protect their mental and physical health.
- Promoting acceptance and diversity: School is the place where young people's attitudes and values are formed. By supporting LGBT+ people and educating the entire school community about diversity, acceptance and tolerance can be promoted in society.
- Vocational school students' personal development: Supporting vocational school teachers on self-acceptance and assertiveness helps LGBT+ students develop a positive self-image and self-confidence, which is crucial to their success both in school and later in life.
- Reducing stress and depression levels: Research shows that a lack of acceptance and support in the school environment can lead to high levels of stress, depression and even suicide attempts among LGBT+ youth. Adequate support can significantly reduce these risks.
- Consistency with democratic values and human rights: Education and support for LGBT+ people are consistent with democratic values and human rights principles that promote equality, respect and dignity for all people.
- Providing support for adult LGBT+ vocational students at school not only supports their individual development and well-being, but also contributes to building a more inclusive and equitable society.



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3. Who are LGBT+ people?

LGBT+ is an acronym for multiple gender identities and sexual orientations. The acronym expands as follows:

- L: Lesbians - women who are emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.
- G: Gay men - men who are emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to other men.
- B: Bisexual people - people who are emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to more than one gender.
- T: Transgender people - people whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. They may identify as male, female, non-binary or otherwise.
- +: Plus symbolizes other sexual identities and orientations that are not listed in the basic abbreviation, such as queer, asexual, pansexual, agender, bigender and others.

4. Diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations

The diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations covers a wide spectrum of experiences and identifications. Here are some of them:

Queer: An umbrella term that can encompass a variety of sexual and gender identities outside traditional categories. Some use it to express their opposition to rigid gender and sexual norms.

Asexual individuals: Individuals who experience little or no sexual attraction. They may still feel romantic attraction.

Pansexual people: People who are emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to people regardless of their gender.

Non-binary individuals: Individuals who do not identify exclusively as male or female. They may identify as agender (no gender), bigender (having two genders), genderqueer (rejecting binary gender categories) and others.

Genderfluid: Individuals whose gender identity may change over time and may include different aspects of male, female and/or other gender identities.



5. Mythologies and facts about the LGBT+ community

There are many myths and misconceptions floating around the LGBT+ community that lead to stereotyping and discrimination. Here are some of the most common myths and the facts that dispel them:

Myth: LGBT+ people are a new phenomenon.

Fact: Stories of people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations have been present in cultures around the world for thousands of years. They have been accepted to varying degrees in different eras and societies.

Myth: Being LGBT+ is a choice.

Fact: Sexual orientation and gender identity are deeply ingrained in an individual and are not a matter of choice. Research shows that they are the result of a complex interaction of genetic, hormonal and environmental factors.

Myth: LGBT+ people are more likely to exhibit "immoral" behavior.

Fact: Sexual orientation and gender identity are not related to morality or ethical behavior. LGBT+ people are just as diverse in behavior and values as heterosexual and cisgender people.

Myth: LGBT+ education in schools "indoctrinates" learners.

Fact: Sexual and gender diversity education helps students understand and respect people's differences, leading to a more inclusive and tolerant society. Studies show that such programs reduce levels of discrimination and violence in schools.

6. How to organize an interesting and effective anti-discrimination event at school

Setting a clear goal for the event, this could be to raise awareness of discrimination and promote equality at school. Choosing a theme that will be engaging for vocational students, such as "Diversity Enriches Us" or "Together Against Discrimination."

Involving the entire school community. Vocational school students' council: Collaborate with the vocational school student council to involve youth in the planning and implementation of the event. Teachers and collaborators in the work environment: Encourage vocational school teachers and school staff to actively participate and support the initiative.

Co-workers in the work environment and caregivers: Inform co-workers about the planned event and invite them to collaborate, such as by attending workshops or information sessions.

Partnerships with organizations and experts, NGOs: Establish partnerships with organizations that specialize in anti-discrimination education and human rights. They can provide educational materials, speakers and conduct workshops.

Experts: Invite experts in the fields of psychology, sociology and human rights who can lead educational sessions and discussions. Planning and scheduling of the event

Workshops and seminars: Organizing interactive workshops to help students better understand diversity and counter discrimination. Examples of topics include: "The role of witnesses in countering discrimination" or "Empathy and understanding of others."

Panel discussions: Conduct panel discussions with vocational school students, vocational school teachers and invited guests on experiences of discrimination and ways to combat it.

Exhibitions and presentations: Creating thematic exhibitions and multimedia presentations featuring the stories of those experiencing discrimination and successes in fighting it. Online communication: Using the school's social media and website to promote the event and encourage participation. Post-event evaluation and reflection, surveys and feedback: Conduct surveys among vocational students to gather feedback on the event and its effectiveness.

Reflection meetings: Organizing meetings with students, teachers and organizers to discuss findings and plan future anti-discrimination activities.

Preparation of a report summarizing the course of the event, objectives achieved and recommendations for the future (evaluation).



7. How to talk to students about LGBT+ issues

1. Interview preparation

a. Acquisition of knowledge

Goal: The teacher should have a solid knowledge base on LGBT+ issues.

Activities:

Read the literature on LGBT+.

Take advantage of available trainings and workshops.

Check out online resources such as the websites of LGBT+ organizations.

b. Creating a safe environment

Goal: To ensure that students can openly express their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment.

Activities:

Set clear classroom rules about respect and empathy.

Use techniques for active listening and giving support.

2. Choosing the right moment and context

a. Integration of the topic in the curriculum

Goal: Natural introduction of LGBT+ topics in various subjects.

Activities:

Consider how the LGBT+ theme can be linked to educational content, e.g. in literature, history, social studies.

Prepare appropriate teaching materials.

b. Responding to current events



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Goal: Use current events to start a conversation.

Activities:

Refer to events in the media or at school that can be a starting point for a conversation about LGBT+ issues.

3. Interview methods

- a. Group discussions
- b. Case studies (case studies)
- c. Role-playing
- d. Creative workshops

4. Summary and reflection

- a. Evaluation of the interview
- b. Continuation of the theme

Goal: Maintain an open dialogue and further develop LGBT+ issues.

Practical exercise - workshop:

"Support Group Workshop" (duration 40 minutes).

Goal: Strengthen emotional support and problem-solving skills in the context of adult LGBT+ vocational students through a simulated support group meeting. Practical application of emotional support skills. To understand different perspectives in LGBT+ situations. Developing collaboration and problem-solving skills in a group setting.

Instructions:

Divide into groups of 4-5 people.

Each group draws one of the prepared scenarios (Appendix 2.)

Each group conducts a simulation of a support group meeting, with one vocational school teacher playing the role of a student (or colleague) and the rest of the group playing the role of vocational school teachers offering support and advice. The groups have 20-25 minutes to conduct the simulation.



After the simulation, each group discusses its experience:

What went well?

What could be improved?

What feelings and reactions emerged during the simulation?

Presentation of results: Each group presents its findings to the other participants. Groups share key insights, difficulties and effective support strategies.

Materials needed:

Scenario cards

Notebooks and pens

Flip charts and markers



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8. Practical communication tips

1. Create a safe and open environment

a. Create an atmosphere of respect

Activities: Set clear rules about respect and prejudice in the classroom. Explain that all students have the right to express their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment.

b. Listen carefully

Activities: Show that you are actively listening by maintaining eye contact, nodding and asking questions. Make sure students feel heard and understood.

2. Use clear and understandable language

a. Avoid jargon and complicated terms

Activities: Try to explain concepts in a simple and understandable way. If you use specialized terms, make sure everyone understands them.

b. Use concrete examples

Activities: Illustrate your points with concrete examples from everyday life or from the context of vocational students. This will help students better understand and remember the information.

3. Encourage active participation

a. Ask open-ended questions

Activities: Open-ended questions, such as "What do you think about...?" encourage vocational students to share their opinions and thoughts. Avoid closed questions that limit answers to "yes" or "no."

b. Use activation methods

Activities: Use a variety of methods, such as group discussions, role plays, case studies, or creative workshops, to engage vocational students and enable them to actively participate.

4. Be flexible and empathetic

a. Adapt to the needs of vocational students

Actions: be ready to adapt your teaching methods to the diverse needs and learning styles of vocational school students. Remember that every vocational school student is different and may need an individualized approach.

b. Show empathy and understanding



Activities: Try to understand the perspectives and experiences of your vocational school students. Show that you care about their emotional well-being and that you are there to support them.

5. Monitor and evaluate communications

a. Regularly check understanding

Activities: Frequently check that students understand the information being conveyed. You can do this through short quizzes, follow-up questions or requests for summaries.

b. Collect feedback

Activities: Encourage vocational students to share their feedback on your communication style and teaching methods. Use this feedback to continuously improve your skills.

6. Develop your communication skills

a. Participate in training and workshops

Activities: Take advantage of available communication training and workshops, both online and on-site. Learn new techniques and methods that you can apply to your work.

b. Read and learn

Activities: Read books and articles on effective communication. Knowledge of communication theory and practice will help you better understand how to communicate effectively with your students.

Workshop exercises:

"Empathy Map" (duration 30 min)

Goal: To develop the ability to understand the perspectives of adult LGBT+ vocational students and to create effective communication strategies by analyzing different points of view. To understand the perspectives and experiences of adult LGBT+ vocational students. To identify effective communication strategies in difficult situations. To develop skills of empathy and understanding of different points of view. To promote cooperation and exchange of experiences among teachers.

Introduction to the exercise: The facilitator introduces the topic of the exercise, an empathy map is a tool that helps understand the experiences, needs and feelings of different people, in this case adult LGBT+ vocational students.



Character presentation: The presenter divides vocational students into four teams and introduces four characters of adult LGBT+ vocational students, each with different challenges and experiences.

Character 1: A gay participant who experiences social exclusion.

Character 2: Transgender student who meets resistance at school.

Character 3: A bisexual student who feels peer pressure.

Character 4: A lesbian course participant who is a victim of cyberbullying.

Creating empathy maps: Each team is given a large sheet of paper and markers. The sheet is divided into six sections:

What a vocational school student says: What messages, questions and concerns does the vocational school student express?

What a vocational school student thinks: What thoughts may accompany the student in this situation.

What a vocational school student feels: What emotions may accompany the student?

What does a vocational student see: What situations, behaviors of others and environment can a vocational student observe?

What does a vocational school student hear: What comments, opinions, and conversations reach the student?

What does a vocational student do: What actions does a vocational student take in response to his or her situation?

Teams have 20 minutes to complete their empathy maps, reflecting on each section from their character's perspective. Vocational students are encouraged to use concrete examples and imagine real-life situations.

Presentation of empathy maps: Each team presents its empathy map to the rest of the vocational students. The presentation should be short (5-7 minutes) and focus on the most important findings.

Group discussion: after the presentations, the presenter initiates a discussion, asking questions such as:

What common threads and differences did you notice between the characters?

What communication strategies can be most effective with each character?



How can we apply these lessons to our daily work with LGBT+ students?

Summary: The workshop leader summarizes the key findings from the discussion and provides a list of practical tips for communicating with LGBT+ students.

Materials needed:

Large sheets of paper

Markers

Notebooks and pens (optional for writing down observations)



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9. Answering questions and concerns of vocational students

Responding to vocational students' questions and concerns is a key element of effective communication, especially in the context of LGBT+ topics. Attentive listening is the foundation of this process, as it allows the teacher to understand not only the content of questions, but also the emotions and intentions of vocational students. It is important to maintain eye contact, nodding and paraphrasing vocational students' statements to confirm understanding of their questions. Openness and acceptance are equally important. Displaying these qualities builds trust and encourages vocational students to share their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment. The teacher should avoid a judgmental tone, be neutral in facial expressions and use inclusive language to create a welcoming environment for conversation. The teacher's answers should be accessible and understandable, which means they must be clear, specific and tailored to the student's level of understanding. It is important to use simple language and avoid complicated terms. The use of examples and analogies can help clarify complex issues, and follow-up questions can ensure that the vocational student has understood the answer. Honesty and authenticity are key to building trust. The teacher should speak openly and admit ignorance if necessary, while promising to come back with an answer once he or she has the right information. This approach shows students that the teacher is authentic and trustworthy. Fostering a sense of security is extremely important so that students feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their concerns. The teacher should ensure that conversations are confidential and create an atmosphere of mutual respect in which students feel protected and understood. Promoting critical thinking also plays an important role. Encouraging vocational students to reflect on different perspectives and develop their own opinions helps them better understand complex issues. The teacher can ask open-ended questions that encourage reflection and discussion, such as "Why do you think this is happening?" or "What do you think about this situation?".

Workshop Exercise: "Questions and Doubts".

(duration 15 min)

Goal: To develop the skills of vocational school teachers in responding to questions and concerns of vocational school students related to LGBT+ issues. Practical application of effective communication techniques. To develop the ability to empathize and understand the perspectives of vocational school students.

Creating strategies to deal with difficult questions and doubts of vocational students.

Promoting an inclusive and supportive school environment.

Introduction to the exercise:

The workshop leader explains the purpose of the exercise and its importance.



He stresses that the goal is to put into practice effective communication techniques such as attentive listening, openness, honesty and promoting critical thinking.

Written task:

Each participant is given a sheet of paper and a pen.

Participants have 5 minutes to write on cards the most common questions and concerns that vocational students may have in the LGBT+ context.

The presenter collects cards from vocational students.

Randomly selects several questions to be discussed at the forum.

Discussing questions:

- The presenter reads aloud the selected questions one by one.
- Each question is discussed in the forum. The presenter encourages people to give answers, share their thoughts and experiences.
- Discussion should last about 5-7 minutes for each question.

Analysis of responses:

After answering each question, the presenter summarizes the most important findings. He points out the effective communication strategies used in the responses. Highlights which techniques (e.g., attentive listening, use of simple language, honesty) were most effective.

The presenter asks vocational students to reflect on the exercise.

Participants share their thoughts on difficulties and successes when answering questions. Finally, the presenter summarizes the exercise, highlighting key points about effective communication in the context of LGBT+ vocational students' questions and concerns.

Materials needed:

Sheets of paper

Pens

Whiteboard or flipchart (optional, for writing down key findings)



10. How to solve discrimination and exclusion problems

Addressing discrimination and exclusion at school requires a multifaceted approach that includes understanding the problem, effective communication, cooperation, and implementation of appropriate actions. The first step is to understand the nature of discrimination and exclusion. Discrimination can take many forms - from direct acts of hostility, to subtle forms of exclusion, to systematic practices that marginalize certain groups. It is important for teachers to be aware of these different forms and be able to recognize them.

Effective communication is a key element in solving problems. Teachers must create open and safe spaces where students can share their experiences and concerns without fear of rejection or reprisal. Attentive listening, empathy and emotional support are invaluable here. The next step is collaboration. Addressing discrimination and exclusion requires cooperation on many levels - between teachers, students, colleagues and school administration. All parties must be involved in the process in order to develop sustainable and effective solutions.

Implementing appropriate measures is the last but equally important step. Teachers should use educational strategies and methods that promote inclusivity and equality. This can include diversity education programs, anti-discrimination workshops, peer mediation and anti-discrimination policies. It is crucial that these activities be consistent and long-term, rather than one-time initiatives.

It is also important to monitor and evaluate the measures taken. Teachers should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of implemented strategies and adjust them as needed. Constant reflection on their own actions and their impact on vocational students allows for continuous improvement of practices.



Workshop exercise:

"Exclusion of the LGBT+ Student".

(duration 35 min)

Goal: Understand the problem of discrimination and exclusion and develop strategies to deal with such a problem in the school context.

Introduction to the exercise:

The facilitator explains the purpose of the exercise and reminds participants that they will be working on a real case of discrimination.

Appendix 4.

Case study:

Groups have 20 minutes to analyze the case, taking into account:

- Identify sources of discrimination and exclusion.
- Understanding the emotions and perspectives of Jacob and others involved.
- Develop communication strategies and activities that can help solve the problem.

Presentation of results:

Each group presents its analysis and proposals for action to the rest of the vocational students. The presentation should last about 5-7 minutes.

Discussion and feedback:

The facilitator and participants discuss the groups' proposals, providing feedback on the effectiveness of the proposed measures.

Summary:

The presenter summarizes key findings and recommendations for addressing discrimination and exclusion.



11. understand the perspective of co-workers and the professional environment of LGBT+ people

Understanding the perspectives of co-workers and those in the professional environment of LGBT+ adult learners requires considering the complex, often emotional responses to the process of disclosing sexual or gender identity in the work and learning environment. Learners who are also active in the workforce may face challenges due to lack of acceptance, prejudice or misunderstanding from co-workers, supervisors or other professional and social participants.

For many in the professional community, confronting a co-worker's LGBT+ identity can evoke emotions such as surprise, uncertainty, fear, and sometimes even resistance due to lack of knowledge or deeply ingrained socio-cultural norms. These reactions are often natural and stem from limited experience interacting with non-heteronormative or transgender people.

For this reason, access to sound education, space to ask questions and talk, and organizational support - both in educational and professional contexts - are crucial. Those around the LGBT+ adult learner should have opportunities to develop competencies in empathy, inclusive communication and understanding of diversity.

Concerns about the future of an LGBT+ person - such as the risk of discrimination, isolation or professional restrictions - are common and require an open educational attitude on the part of institutions and educators. Fostering positive attitudes and countering stereotypes among colleagues can significantly affect learners' well-being and successful functioning as employees and listeners.

The process of acceptance and adaptation by the professional environment is one that requires time, understanding and commitment. The role of educators and training institutions is not only to support the LGBT+ student, but also to create conditions that foster openness, acceptance and constructive cooperation in educational and professional environments.



12. typical problems and difficulties of adults learning and working.

Adult learners who simultaneously function in a professional environment may face a variety of difficulties related to the topic of LGBT+ identity - both in their professional and personal environments. For those supporting loved ones who identify as LGBT+, these challenges may include not only emotional adjustment to the new situation, but also reconciling professional, family and educational roles.

Accepting and understanding a loved one's identity is often the first and most difficult step. Adults who combine work and study may struggle with their own beliefs and emotions, especially if their knowledge of the LGBT+ community is limited. Reconciling personal values with a new reality can take time, support and an openness to a change in perspective.

Concerns about the safety and future of a loved one are another source of stress. People who study and work worry about the possibility of discrimination, social exclusion or lack of acceptance in the workplace, school or community. These concerns are particularly strong when it comes to transgender, non-binary or queer people, who are more likely to face misunderstanding and hostility.

Difficulties in interpersonal communication - both in family and professional relationships - are a common problem. Adult learners may have limited time and emotional resources to have supportive conversations, which can lead to tension and misunderstandings. A lack of ability to dialogue about topics related to gender identity or sexual orientation often stems from a lack of prior exposure to such topics.

Many adults also experience **internal conflicts and guilt** - they wonder if their upbringing, values or behavior may have influenced the difficulties their loved one is facing. This feeling can be aggravating, especially when they have to balance it with professional and educational responsibilities.

A shortage of information and support resources is also a significant problem. Adult learners often don't know where to look for help - they lack access to support groups, specialists or proven educational materials that would allow them to better understand and support their loved ones. Finally, there is **a sense of social isolation**, which can be particularly strong in professional environments where the topic of LGBT+ identity is still taboo. Those supporting LGBT+ loved ones may feel alone in their actions, especially if those around them do not show understanding or empathy.



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13. emotional and educational support for adult learners and workers

Adults who simultaneously study and work function in an extremely complex psychosocial environment in which professional, educational and family responsibilities overlap. When the need for support from a person who identifies as LGBT+ arises in their lives, they need comprehensive, multidimensional support - both emotional and educational. The goal of this support is not only to counter the crisis, but also to build competencies that will enable them to respond adequately and empathetically in the long term.

1. provide empathetic emotional support

The first and key element is to create a space where adults can safely express their emotions - including anxiety, fear, insecurity or internal contradictions. Recognizing these emotions as a natural part of the adaptation process is the basis for further personal development. Professional emotional support - in the form of individual therapy, support groups or psychological consultations - should focus on accepting these emotions and developing the mental resilience necessary for supporting roles.

2. work on integrating personal values and attitudes towards LGBT+

Many adults struggle with the conflict between their existing beliefs and the new reality of a loved one's coming out or the presence of LGBT+ topics in professional and educational spaces. Supportive interventions should offer a safe environment to reflect on one's values, and help transform attitudes - from potential resistance or ambivalence toward empathy, acceptance and readiness to act. Support can include elements of coaching, narrative therapy, or civic and social attitude development method work.

3. developing communication and relational competence

In the context of supporting LGBT+ people, the quality of communication - both within the family and in professional settings - is crucial. Workshops on empathetic communication, active listening and conflict resolution help adult participants learn how to talk with respect, openness and attentiveness. It is especially important to acquire the skills to have a non-judgmental dialogue that enables an LGBT+ person to share their experiences openly.

4. education and deconstruction of LGBT+ stereotypes

Education is the foundation for change. Learning and working adults should be provided with reliable, up-to-date and scientifically verified information about sexual orientation, gender identity and the challenges faced by LGBT+ people in various spheres of life. It is critical here to de-mythologize beliefs based on stereotypes and erroneous assumptions. Educational programs can include webinars, guest lectures, access to multimedia materials, and consultations with specialists (sexologists, psychologists, educators).



5. providing information on available forms of institutional support

Adults studying and working should be equipped with knowledge of local and national resources - family support groups, LGBT+ rights organizations, specialized psychological counseling centers or educational materials. It is crucial that these resources are realistically accessible - both in terms of location and time, which is particularly important for those combining education with work.

6. develop practical skills to support LGBT+ loved ones

Support must not be limited to declarative acceptance - it must also be evident in actions. Adults should acquire skills in:

- Supporting a loved one in the face of discrimination,
- Affirmation of her identity in everyday situations,
- Creating a safe, accepting family and work environment,
- proactively respond to manifestations of intolerance in the workplace or education.

Practical training in the form of case studies, simulations of difficult situations or work in reflective groups is particularly effective in this regard.

7. emergency preparedness and intervention

An essential component of support is preparing adults for difficult situations - such as an emotional crisis of a loved one, attempts at self-harm, social exclusion or violence (in the family, at work, at school). Support programs should include a crisis intervention component - guidance on how to recognize danger symptoms, how to respond and where to refer for specialized help. Often, basic knowledge is enough to prevent escalation of the crisis and help in a timely manner.

14. mediation in vocational education - an effective tool for dialogue and anti-discrimination

Contemporary adult education - especially in professional, culturally and identity-diverse environments - increasingly faces the challenge of not only imparting knowledge, but also fostering attitudes of openness, empathy and social responsibility. In this context, peer mediation is becoming an extremely important tool not only for resolving interpersonal conflicts, but above all for building a culture of dialogue and mutual respect, including towards LGBT+ people.

Peer mediation is a collaborative and empathetic process conducted by trained members of the same community - in this case, adult participants in educational processes, who, with the right competencies, can act as neutral mediators. Its main goal is to enable the conflicting parties to jointly work out solutions that are acceptable to all and that do not impose settlements from the outside.

In order for mediation to work effectively in a vocational education environment, it is crucial that the process and its participants are properly prepared. Those selected as mediators should receive professional training that includes not only communication and negotiation techniques, but also issues related to social diversity, including sexual orientation, gender identity, and mechanisms of exclusion and microaggressions. This knowledge is essential, especially when the source of conflict is prejudice or lack of acceptance of otherness.

The mediation process begins with preliminary meetings, during which the mediator talks individually with each party to the conflict. This stage serves to understand the emotional context of the situation, set expectations and prepare the ground for a joint meeting. The mediation meeting itself should be conducted in an atmosphere of respect, openness and confidentiality. Mediators do not impose solutions - their role is to facilitate communication, provide equal access to voice and support in naming emotions and needs. Special attention should be paid to situations where conflicts involve the identity of the participants - for example, when one of the adults experiences discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender expression. Mediators must be prepared to recognize subtle forms of exclusion, such as ridicule, avoidance, or seemingly "innocent" comments that have a profound impact on the psychological well-being of an LGBT+ person. In such cases, mediation should not serve to "settle at all costs," but to support the process of awareness, empathizing and changing attitudes. An important element of mediation is its termination - that is, the moment when the parties come to a common understanding. Termination should not be merely formal - it must be supported by a real understanding and readiness to implement changes. Drawing up final documentation, determining the next steps and planning monitoring of the implemented solutions helps to consolidate the positive effects and prevent a recurrence of the conflict. In more complex situations, such as when tensions escalate or symptoms of psychological violence appear, mediation may not be sufficient. Then it is necessary to include additional support - psychological, therapeutic or intervention. Educational institutions should have a



clear response procedure in place and a network of contacts to professional entities that can support participants in crisis. The implementation of peer mediation in adult learning and working environments is not only a solution to specific disputes, but also an investment in the development of social competence, a democratic work culture and conscious inclusiveness. Learning communities that implement this method with respect for diversity give their members real tools to counter discrimination and build a safe, accepting environment - both in the classroom and in the workplace.

I. The preparatory stage - the foundation of effective mediation

Recruitment and training of mediators

In adult environments, mediators should be people who are trusted, distinguished by their emotional stability, ability to remain neutral and high interpersonal competence. They can be educators, tutors, educational project coordinators, team leaders or employees of educational and training institutions. It is important that the selection of mediators be transparent, voluntary and based on competence, not hierarchy.

Training of mediators should be based on three pillars:

- **Technical-communicative:** introduction to mediation methodology, active listening techniques, formulating questions, building neutral language and regulating tensions.
- **Ethical and legal:** principles of confidentiality, impartiality, voluntariness, as well as knowledge of the legal aspects of anti-discrimination in the workplace.
- **Socio-cultural:** in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon of diversity (with a particular focus on sexual orientation, gender identity and inclusivity), as well as awareness of biases and microaggressions present in organizational culture.

Thus prepared, mediators gain not only the tools to conduct conversations, but also the ability to build a safe space for dialogue - crucial in the LGBT+ context.

Mediation structure and procedure

The mediation process in an adult environment must be **clearly defined, embedded in an institutional framework** and understood by all participants. Working adults value efficiency, clarity of rules and timeframes - so mediation should be precisely planned:

- Initial meetings with each party - to understand individual needs, emotions and readiness for mediation.
- The actual mediation session - moderated by the mediator with the following structure: opening up, expressing positions, seeking common points, generating solutions.



- Closure and evaluation - that is, documenting findings, planning implementation and evaluating the process.

Documentation tools

In working with adults, formalization of the process is essential. Documentation should include:

- Mediation consent form,
- A charter of the problems and goals of mediation,
- memorandum of understanding,
- schedule of monitoring meetings,
- evaluation surveys.

Formalization is not for control, but for transparency and building trust in the professional community.

II. The course of mediation - space for constructive dialogue

Preliminary meetings

Individual conversations with each party are crucial - this is the moment when the mediator establishes a relationship based on trust and safe communication. Adult participants may not be used to talking about emotions - so it's worth using the tools of active listening, paraphrasing and open-ended questions to help them name their needs and concerns.

At the same time, this is the time for **educational preparation of** the parties - explaining what mediation is, what the rules are, and what the mediator's role is as a neutral person.

Mediation session

The session should be set in a structure that the mediator clearly communicates from the beginning. Adults often expect specifics, so the mediator should take care:

- **Clarity of language**, avoiding psychological jargon or judgments,
- **Equal access to the floor**, moderation of speaking time,
- **Regulating tensions**, such as through pausing, mirroring or short break techniques.



The mediator must be particularly sensitive to aspects of discrimination or intolerance - even if they are not explicitly named. In the case of a conflict involving an LGBT+ person, it is worthwhile to ensure inclusive and non-judgmental language, and to firmly protect the mediation space from homophobic or transphobic messages.

III. Working out solutions - from conversation to action

Once the core of the conflict has been identified, the mediator moves to the phase of finding solutions. In professional and educational settings, it is important that solutions be:

- **specific and operational** (e.g., a new way of communicating information, a change in routine, an application for joint training),
- **mutually agreed upon**, not imposed,
- **Verifiable over time** (specifying what will change, by when, how to measure it).

It is recommended to document these agreements in a written form, signed by both parties and the mediator.

IV. Closing the mediation and monitoring the effects

Completion of mediation is not just a summary. It's also **the formalization** of the parties' **responsibility** for implementing the agreements and **planning mechanisms to control the effectiveness**.

- Set a schedule for follow-up meetings (e.g., after 2 weeks, a month).
 - Conduct a brief evaluation (survey or individual interview).
 - Suggest a channel of communication in case the conflict is renewed.
-

V. Reinforcement support and corrective actions

Not every conflict can be resolved through mediation. Adults, especially those functioning in emotionally charged environments, may need psychological, therapeutic or institutional support.

In case of serious violations, such as:



- persistent discrimination,
- Verbal or psychological violence,
- Rejection of a person because of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity,

educational institution or employer **is obliged to** implement intervention procedures and use external experts - psychologists, professional mediators, anti-discrimination organizations or an ombudsman.

15. the role of mediation in conflict resolution in vocational schools

Today's vocational and technical schools are operating in an environment that is increasingly diverse in terms of social, cultural and identity. As the UNESCO (2020) report on inclusive education points out, one of the key challenges facing educational institutions is the development of social skills, including conflict resolution in a constructive and dialogue-based manner. In this context, mediation is an effective tool for educational work, both in the case of peer conflicts and situations involving exclusion or prejudice against students from marginalized backgrounds - including LGBT+ students. Tensions arise in trade and technical schools, where students often combine study with work or apprenticeships, due to differences in worldviews, social roles and limited communication skills. According to an analysis by the Institute for Educational Research (IBE, 2022), vocational school students are particularly vulnerable to interpersonal conflict situations - both in the classroom and in the work environment. Mediation, as a method based on voluntariness, impartiality and mutual respect, responds to these needs, reinforcing pro-social attitudes and supporting the construction of a safe educational climate. A key role in the mediation process is played by teachers - including vocational teachers - who act as moderators and facilitators of dialogue between students. Their task is not to settle disputes, but to support young people in developing competencies such as expressing emotions, recognizing the needs of the other party, and coming to satisfactory solutions together. OECD research (2021) shows that implementing peer mediation-based strategies in vocational schools not only leads to a reduction in conflicts and violent incidents, but also strengthens collaborative skills that are highly valued in the job market. Thus, from the perspective of vocational education, mediation becomes not only an educational tool, but also an element of preparing students to function responsibly in a professional environment.

16. mediation techniques and methods in vocational schools - development of interpersonal skills and anti-discrimination

Effective use of mediation in vocational schools requires adapting methods to the specifics of student groups - often with varying social resources, motivation levels and communication styles. Teachers should know and be able to apply mediation techniques that allow them to effectively respond to conflicts related to symbolic violence, stereotypes and lack of acceptance of otherness - especially with regard to students with non-heteronormative identities.

Key mediation techniques:

- **Active listening** - builds trust and allows the student to feel noticed and respected. This technique reduces tension and helps reformulate negative messages.
- **Paraphrasing and reflecting emotions** - strengthens awareness of one's own and others' emotions, promotes empathy.
- **Asking open-ended questions** - allows you to get to the heart of the conflict and avoid making accusations.
- **Reformulating the narrative** - turns personal conflicts into a conversation about needs and values.

Mediation styles - tailored to the needs of vocational schools:

- **Facilitative** - promotes students' independence in resolving conflicts with the assistance of the teacher.
- **Evaluative** - the teacher, knowing the context of the practice and the rules of the school, can point out possible consequences of behavior.
- **Transformational** - helps build lasting attitude change and increase understanding of diversity.
- **Narrative** - allows students to present their stories, which is especially important in cultural or identity conflicts.
- **Integrative** - seeks win-win solutions, which promotes the integration of the class group and practice teams.

Workshop: "Conflict resolution in a vocational school - mediation as an educational tool".



Goal: To develop practical mediation competencies among teachers in professional and technical schools, with an emphasis on situations typical of professional environments and culturally diverse classrooms.

Duration: about 20 minutes

Stages:

1. **Theoretical introduction** - a brief discussion of the principles and benefits of mediation at school.
2. **Divide into working groups** - participants play the roles of students and mediators.
3. **Case analysis** - for example, diversity conflict in a technical lab or during an internship at a workplace.
4. **Mediation simulation** - practical practice of dialogue and conflict de-escalation techniques.
5. **Discussion and reflection** - analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the process.
6. **Summary** - highlighting mediation as a key competency in vocational education and the work environment.

Exercise 1: Conflict map - diagnosis of the school situation

Goal: To teach teachers to analyze conflict from a systems perspective, identifying sources of tension and the interests of the parties.

Duration: 30 minutes

Form: teamwork

Description: Participants are given a fictional description of the conflict (e.g., "A student from the logistics technician class feels discriminated against by his peers because of his gender expression"). Groups develop a "conflict map" that includes:

- The parties to the conflict and their perspectives,
- hidden needs and concerns,
- The potential consequences of not intervening,
- mediation proposals.

Materials: conflict analysis sheet, markers, scenario cards.



Exercise 2: Simulation of mediation - teacher intervention

Aim: To develop the ability to facilitate a mediation conversation between students.

Duration: 40 minutes

Form: role-playing

Description: In threes, participants act out a mediation scene. One teacher plays the role of the mediator, the others play the students involved in the conflict (randomized scenario). The simulation lasts 10-15 minutes and includes:

- The phase of presenting positions,
- The phase of exploring emotions and needs,
- solution-seeking phase.

The group then conducts a self-reflection using a mediation evaluation sheet.

Materials: conflict scenarios, reflection sheet, timer.

Exercise 3: Attitude barometer - the teacher in the face of worldview conflicts

Goal: To reflect on the limits of professional neutrality and one's own beliefs about equality in education.

Duration: 20 minutes

Form: individual reflection + group discussion

Description: participants mark their position on a scale of 1-5 against statements such as:

- "A teacher should intervene only in cases of physical aggression."
- "I'm not responsible for the topic of student identity - that's the role of the educator."
- "Neutrality does not mean passivity in the face of exclusion."

The presenter then moderates the discussion, referring to the standards of professional ethics for teachers and educational laws.



Exercise 4: Micro situations - quick diagnosis and response

Purpose: To train responses to discriminatory situations or microaggressions in the classroom and during professional practice.

Duration: 30 minutes

Form: work in pairs + discussion in the forum

Description: each pair draws one of the micro-situations (e.g., "A student makes fun of a colleague's appearance," "A practice teacher uses inappropriate terms for a transgender person"). The task is to:

1. Identifying the nature of the behavior (is it microaggression, discrimination, a joke?),
2. To propose a teacher's response in line with mediation and educational approaches,
3. Refer to the Code of Ethics for Teachers or educational law.

Materials: micro-situation cards, abbreviated response rules, flipchart.

Exercise 5: Journal of a mediator - self-reflection of a professional teacher

Goal: To build self-awareness of one's own attitudes, emotions and patterns of action in conflict situations.

Duration: 15 minutes

Form: individual work

Description: Participants write down answers to questions:

- How do I usually respond to conflict between students?
- What's stopping me from going to mediation?
- What attitude do I want to develop as a vocational teacher in a diverse environment?

The journal can serve as a resource for further supervision or evaluation of training.



Exercise 6: Decision game - "And now what?"

Goal: To develop the ability to make educational decisions in socially and emotionally risky situations.

Duration: 25 minutes

Form: teamwork + presentation

Description: groups are given a realistic educational dilemma (e.g., "A student reports feeling harassed by a co-worker at practice - but asks for discretion"). The team makes a decision and prepares a brief rationale for their actions, taking into account:

- student welfare,
- duty to protect,
- employer relations,
- legal and ethical framework.

Presentation of decisions and feedback from other groups.

17. how to help rather than avoid the topic of "Otherness" in vocational education

Introduction: vocational education in the context of diversity

Contemporary vocational education, embedded in the reality of dynamic social, economic and cultural changes, faces an urgent need to redefine its approach to diversity and inclusiveness. Students in vocational and technical schools are not a homogeneous group - on the contrary, they represent a variety of gender identities, sexual orientations, cultural backgrounds, worldviews, fitness levels, family and socioeconomic statuses.

According to the concept of transformational education (Mezirow, 2000), education cannot be limited to the transmission of professional knowledge and skills. It should support students in the process of reflection on themselves and the surrounding world, offering space to confront difference - both interpersonally and institutionally.

Silence as a form of symbolic violence

In many vocational schools, topics related to so-called "otherness" - understood as a deviation from the dominant social norm - are kept quiet for fear of controversy, "violation of neutrality" or lack of staff competence. This includes issues of sexual orientation, gender identity, migration status, disability or cultural differences, among others. However, silence is not a neutral stance - it is a form of covert systemic violence.

The lack of minority representation in the school narrative (programs, textbooks, internal communications) results in symbolic exclusion - students from non-normative groups do not see themselves in the institutional structure, which translates into under-motivation, fear of exposure, activity avoidance and withdrawal from classroom life.

As highlighted in a report by the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA, 2020), LGBT+ students in technical and vocational schools are particularly vulnerable to relational violence, isolation and so-called microaggressions - that is, everyday, often unconscious acts of exclusion (e.g., jokes, gestures, ignoring). Their consequences are long-term and affect not only the well-being of students, but also the quality of the educational process as a whole.

Inclusive education: from values to action system

Inclusive education - as defined by UNESCO - is not a set of one-off actions, but *a sustained process of reforming educational culture, policy and practice to better respond to the diverse needs of all students*. In this view, a vocational school should not wait for a crisis to react - but



actively design an environment in which every student experiences visibility, subjectivity and safety.

In practice, this means, among other things:

- **Incorporating diversity issues into the content of professional and general education - for example, by analyzing case studies, addressing professional ethics, teamwork standards and anti-discrimination in the workplace;**
- **Using inclusive language and narrative - avoiding stereotyping, heteronormativity, class and racial assumptions;**
- **Modeling empathetic relationships in student teams and during apprenticeships, including by vocational teachers;**
- **Strengthening the competence of teaching staff in diversity management - through training, supervision, coaching and institutional support.**

Support structures - institutional solutions, not ad hoc gestures

Effective support for students from marginalized groups requires systemic solutions. As ILGA-Europe's (2022) research shows, the greatest protection against exclusion is not individual action, but the institutional readiness of schools to recognize and respond to complex identity situations.

Recommended solutions include:

- **anti-discrimination and anti-violence policies that take into account the diversity of students (not only gender and disability, but also sexual orientation, social status, ethnicity),**
- **a formal abuse reporting procedure based on confidentiality and non-retaliation,**
- **Peer support and mentoring groups where students can share their experiences without judgment or fear,**
- **A network of contacts with specialists (mediators, psychologists, equality counselors),**
- **visibility of positive role models - for example, graduates and students with diverse backgrounds who have achieved success in the industry.**



Vocational educator as cultural change agent

In the pedagogical literature, the teacher is increasingly described as an "agent of change" (Fullan, 2016) - a person responsible not only for the transmission of knowledge, but for shaping the conditions for the development of civic, critical and empathetic attitudes. Vocational teachers, who are often closest to students in real working conditions, play a key role in this process. Their behavior, language, choice of professional examples and reactions to microaggressions model the culture of the entire class or student team.

Therefore, it is essential:

- Continuous improvement of the competence of teaching staff in the area of working with diversity (training, certification, Erasmus+ programs for teachers),
- Supervision and intervention as a standard for the work of teacher teams,
- Interaction of educators, teachers of professions, educators and management at the level of common educational policy.

Diversity as a resource - not as a "problem to be solved"

From the point of view of modern pedagogy (Freire, hooks, Mezirow), diversity is not an obstacle, but a condition for the development of meaningful, dialogical and transformative education. It is the contact with different experience - social, emotional, cultural - that enables students to develop the key competencies of the 21st century: critical thinking, flexibility, empathy and cooperation.

A vocational school that recognizes diversity as an educational value:

- designs interdisciplinary and project activities around real social problems,
- Uses case studies, simulations, narrative analysis of students and professional practitioners,
- treats the classroom as a laboratory for cooperation and shared responsibility,
- Prepares students to function in diverse work environments - taking into account global trends of inclusivity and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance).

Summary: Toward a school of social justice

Responsible vocational education cannot abstract from the social context in which students function. The topic of "otherness" is not a worldview topic - it is a pedagogical, ethical and practical topic. To help, not avoid, means: to create a school where all students feel seen, safe and important. It's also a school that equips them with the competencies to work in a diverse world - and therefore a modern, demanding and more humane one.

18. What are the biggest mistakes made by people close to LGBT+ people?

Supporting LGBT+ people in social and educational settings is not just a gesture of kindness - it is an obligation based on basic principles of equality, ethics and interpersonal responsibility. Meanwhile, in many cases, those in close proximity - family members, co-workers, acquaintances or educators - unknowingly replicate behaviors and attitudes that, instead of strengthening, destabilize the identity process and undermine LGBT+ people's sense of security.

These errors are not always due to malice. Much more often they have their origin in a lack of knowledge, internal axiological tensions or social stereotypes that, unchallenged, function as a default framework for interpreting reality. It is their unconsciousness that makes them so difficult to grasp and so destructive at the same time.

One of the most serious and common mistakes is **ignoring or minimizing the identity of an LGBT+ person**. This manifests itself in a number of ways - from not using preferred pronouns and name, to avoiding topics related to personal life, to a complete failure to recognize her claimed identity as real and deserving of respect. Such a strategy of apparent "non-delivery of conflicts" most often functions as an expression of the discomfort of an environment that is not ready to accept a reality different from the heteronormative one. Unfortunately, in the perception of an LGBT+ person, this is tantamount to rejection.

Related to this is another important issue: **attempts to reinterpret or "correct" identity**. When an LGBT+ person encounters narratives suggesting that his or her identity is the result of a "phase," a "fad," or a trauma, he or she has the foundation of his or her own existence undermined. Such messages - even if formulated with the intention of helping or protecting - are exclusionary and psychologically violent. Research unequivocally shows that lack of acceptance in one's immediate environment, combined with attempts to change one's identity, significantly increases the risk of depression, self-harm and educational and professional exclusion.

No less egregious is the failure to respond to discrimination - in both overt and subtle forms. Silence in the face of transphobic jokes, toleration of homophobic comments, or the normalization of microaggressions ("I don't mind, but...") leads to the perpetuation of the belief that the social space is not safe. For many LGBT+ people, the absence of a voice of support in moments when public declarations of hatred are made is more acute than the



hatred itself. In professional education, where there is no child-teacher asymmetry, the responsibility for communicative culture is shared - but it is the immediate environment (co-participants, educators, mentors) that has the greatest potential to counter these mechanisms.

A separate but related problem is **silence due to uncertainty or fear of "awkwardness."** Some people around us avoid talking about sexual and gender identity because they don't know how to act, what to say, or are afraid of making a mistake. Meanwhile, avoidance is a message in itself - most often interpreted as lack of interest, indifference or even condemnation. In reality, it is the attempt to have a sincere conversation, even an imperfect one, that demonstrates concern and a willingness to build a relationship of trust. The absence of such conversation deepens emotional isolation and reinforces the sense of otherness as a burden.

A particularly dangerous mistake - often underestimated in its seriousness - is **violating privacy by revealing someone's identity (known as outing)** without their consent. Such an act can have serious consequences: from exclusion in the workplace, to severance of family relationships, to real threats to safety. For LGBT+ adults, outing is not only a betrayal of trust, but also a violation of the right to autonomy and self-determination. In any situation - regardless of intentions - the LGBT+ person must be the one to decide to whom, when and under what conditions they reveal their identity.

Finally, it's worth pointing out another often-overlooked aspect: **the lack of emotional presence in crisis situations.** When LGBT+ people experience discrimination, rejection or an identity crisis, their environment should be a source of support. Unfortunately, all too often the response is silence, changing the subject, avoiding contact - and sometimes even redirecting responsibility ("you have to be stronger," "don't worry"). The lack of empathetic accompaniment in such moments leads to a sense of deep loneliness and lack of support, which can have long-term emotional consequences.

It is not necessary to know all the terminology or understand every nuance to be a good ally. What is key is **a willingness to learn, reflect and accept that our words and actions matter.** An environment that doesn't respond to its own mistakes doesn't grow with the LGBT+ person - and thus stops their relational and emotional development.



Training module:

"From Intentions to Responsibility. How to avoid mistakes and realistically support LGBT+ people in vocational education"

Duration: 90-120 minutes

Recipients: educators, trainers, executives, mentors, tutors, people working in multicultural or multiple identity environments

Operational Objectives:

- Identify key mistakes made against LGBT+ people in educational and professional settings.
- Development of communication skills based on empathy and inclusive language.
- Forming alliance attitudes and responding to discrimination and microaggressions.
- Redirect supportive intentions into actions with real impact.

Exercise 1: "Intention vs. Effect"

Form: teamwork (groups of 3-4 people)

Duration: 25 minutes

Description:

Participants analyze examples of statements or behaviors that are often made in "good faith" and yet can be perceived as exclusionary or violent.

Examples:

- "I have nothing against gays, as long as they don't flaunt it at work."
- "Why the pronouns? After all, it's clear what it looks like."
- "You're too smart to say you're bisexual."

Tasks for the group:

1. What intention might the person uttering the sentence have?
2. What might be the real effect of such a message on an LGBT+ person?
3. How could we respond differently to make the message supportive?

Educational goal: to develop linguistic awareness and reflective competence, to distinguish between subjective intention and objective effect of statements.



Exercise 2: "Support and Risk Map".

Form: individual work + plenary discussion

Duration: 20 minutes

Description:

Participants are given a schematic drawing of a "map" of educational or professional space (e.g., classrooms, corridors, team communication, individual consultation). Their task is:

- Mark spaces that foster inclusion and safety for LGBT+ people.
- Identify risk areas (places, situations, relationships) that may generate discomfort, exclusion or risk of outing.

Reflection: what determines that a space or relationship is supportive? What institutional interventions can strengthen these spaces?

Educational objective: to develop analytical competence in diagnosing the organizational environment for inclusiveness.

Exercise 3: "Boundary Situations - Supportive Responses."

Form: work in pairs or small groups

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Description:

Participants receive case studies (mini-scenarios) describing real-life situations that require a response from the environment. Each group develops a possible response based on empathy, non-discriminatory language and equality standards.

Example scenarios:

- A colleague from the education team says: "I don't understand these non-binary people - let them make up their minds."
- The course participant privately tells the instructor that he identifies as a transgender person and asks to use his new name.
- During the workshop, another person comments: "It's an exaggeration with these pronouns. It's just a fad."



Tasks:

- What would be wrong in this situation?
- How to respond assertively, yet supportively?
- What resources (bylaws, code, diversity policy) can you use in your institution?

Educational goal: to develop skills to respond to symbolic violence and microaggressions in real time.

Exercise 4: "Dialogue instead of correctness - how to talk about otherness?"

Form: moderated discussion (or fishbowl)

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Description:

Participants take part in a moderated discussion in which they share their experiences of talking about identity, diversity and "awkwardness." Guiding questions:

- What keeps me from talking openly with an LGBT+ person?
- How can I speak empathetically if I am not an expert?
- How do you tell the difference between curiosity and nosiness?

Educational goal: to break down language and cultural barriers related to LGBT+ issues, promoting authentic dialogue instead of perfect "correctness."

Final Exercise: "One change - personal commitment".

Form: individual reflection + (optional) public sharing

Duration: 10 minutes

Description:

Each participant writes down on a piece of paper one action, resolution or change they intend to make in their professional/educational environment to improve LGBT+ inclusion.



Examples:

- "I start every new training group with a question about names and pronouns."
- "I will react when someone says a homophobic joke."
- "I will propose the introduction of a diversity policy at my institution."

Educational goal: to translate reflection into real action - to ground the training effect in practice.

Recommended materials to support the training:

- Excerpts from: *"Anti-discrimination Education. A trainer's manual,"* TEA (2023)
- List of organizations supporting LGBT+ people and inclusive education (e.g., Campaign Against Homophobia, Lambda Warsaw, Tolerado).
- Inclusive language card for educators (author's or institutional support material)

19. teaching learners self-acceptance and assertiveness

Teaching learners self-acceptance and assertiveness is fundamental to healthy emotional and social development. Introducing these skills requires thoughtful educational activities and support from vocational school teachers, the school and colleagues.

The first step in teaching self-acceptance is to create an environment in which learners feel safe and accepted. Teachers should model attitudes of acceptance and respect, demonstrating that every person is valuable and deserves respect regardless of differences. It is crucial to incorporate themes of diversity and inclusiveness into the curriculum, using literature, films and other educational materials that promote positive models of self-acceptance.

Teachers can conduct activities and workshops that help learners understand their emotions, recognize their strengths and develop positive self-esteem. Exercises can include techniques such as creating personal "strengths flowers," where learners write their skills and talents on paper flower petals, which can then be displayed in the classroom. Such visual representations help learners see their unique values.

Workshop exercises (supplementary module to equality training for vocational school teachers)



Exercise 1: Body positivity as a tool to promote self-acceptance and mental health

Duration: 15 minutes

Educational Goal: To develop self-reflection skills in the context of self-image, raise awareness of the importance of corporeality in the process of vocational education, and strengthen empathy towards participants with experiences of bodily exclusion.

Exercise Description: The presenter introduces participants to the topic of corporeality, highlighting its importance for adult learners' self-esteem and psychological well-being. In the context of vocational education, it is particularly important to realize that participants - regardless of age or background - often bring to the educational space experiences of objectification, criticism or marginalization because of their appearance.

Instructions: Participants are given sticky notes and pens. Each person writes down four things he or she accepts or appreciates about his or her body - both physical and functional (e.g., "I appreciate my hands because I create with them," "I like my gray hair - it's part of my story").

Then, in a voluntary and safe atmosphere, willing participants share a selected item from their list. The facilitator moderates the conversation, helping participants identify how working on body image affects educational processes and group relationships.

Practical application: The discussion includes a reflection on the possibilities of applying this type of exercise in work with adults - both in general groups and among people experiencing exclusion (people with disabilities, LGBT+ people, older people, people after experiences of violence).

Exercise 2: Assertiveness as a competency to support inclusiveness

Duration: 30 minutes

Educational Goal: Strengthen communication skills in assertively expressing needs and boundaries, with a focus on situations related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and protection of minority rights.

Introduction: The presenter provides a definition of assertiveness as the ability to express one's emotions, opinions and needs in a direct way that respects both oneself and others. He emphasizes that in working with adults - especially in the context of diversity - assertiveness is a tool to counteract symbolic violence and to support people who may be experiencing micro-aggressions and exclusion.

Course of the exercise: Participants analyze selected situational scenarios - realistic, set in the context of vocational education:



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- Refusing to continue working with a person who does not respect the participant's gender identity.
- Reaction to an event organized by an institution that marginalizes LGBT+ people.
- Asking for help and support in the process of accepting one's identity.

Each participant writes two sample assertive messages that could be said in the situations described. The facilitator discusses them on the board, emphasizing neutral language, non-defensive strategies, "I-message" techniques, and awareness of one's own and the other party's emotions.

Practical application: The exercise ends with a reflection: How do we develop assertiveness in adult learners, especially those with experiences of internalized homophobia or transgression of social norms? How to model assertiveness as an educator?

Exercise 3: Reflective training bracket - "What am I leaving with today?"

Duration: 40 minutes

Educational Purpose: To enable participants to make a structured summary of the key content of the training, self-reflect on the skills learned and formulate a personal action plan.

Exercise Description: The presenter invites participants to briefly self-reflect on the following questions:

- What was the most important thing for me today? What surprised me?
- What can I immediately apply to my educational practice?
- What do I need further development or support in?

After a moment of silence and individual work, participants (on a voluntary basis) share their conclusions with the group. The facilitator moderates the discussion, grouping topics around the axis: knowledge - attitude - action. He encourages the formulation of realistic and measurable resolutions (e.g., "I will introduce the principles of inclusive language at the beginning of each new group", "I will offer a colleague(s) an anti-discrimination workshop for the team").

Purpose: The exercise helps integrate new content into participants' belief and action systems. It fosters internalization of the educator's role as a leader of social change.

Exercise 4: Evaluation of the training - Survey (Appendix 5)



Duration: 15 minutes

Educational Purpose: To evaluate the relevance, effectiveness and usefulness of the training by its participants for further optimization.

Description: Participants complete a prepared evaluation questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions:

- To what extent did the training meet your expectations?
- How do you assess the usefulness of the content discussed in your professional work?
- What was worth adding, deepening or changing?

The survey can be supplemented with questions about participants' comfort level with LGBT+ topics and identification of potential implementation barriers.

Use: Findings from the surveys can be used to personalize further educational activities and implement strategies to improve equality competencies at the institutional level.

Completion of the module

The presenter closes the workshop by emphasizing the continuity of the process of acquiring competence in the area of supporting LGBT+ people in professional education. He encourages participants to treat the acquired knowledge not as a one-time activity, but as a foundation for further learning, testing solutions and initiating changes in the professional environment.

He thanks you for your activism and openness, and encourages you to keep in touch, and to take advantage of substantive resources, tools to support equality, and support institutions. Jointly building an educational environment based on respect and equality is a process in which every change matters.



Appendix 1

Thank you for attending the workshop on supporting adult LGBT+ vocational students in schools. Before the training, we ask you to fill out this survey to help us assess your current level of knowledge and preparation for working with LGBT+ students. After the workshop, we will ask you to complete the same survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

1. How would you rate your knowledge of the LGBT+ community?

- Very low
- Low
- Average
- High
- Very high

2. How often do you cover topics related to gender diversity and sexual orientation in your lessons?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

3. do you feel confident in talking to students about LGBT+ issues?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

4 What are your skills in dealing with discrimination issues in the classroom?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Medium
- Good
- Very good

5. do you know where to refer fellow adult LGBT+ vocational students for help and support?



- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

6. How would you rate your peer mediation skills?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Medium
- Good
- Very good

7. How prepared do you feel to create an inclusive and safe space for adult LGBT+ vocational students in the classroom?

- Definitely unprepared
- Rather unprepared
- Neutrals
- Rather prepared/
- Definitely prepared/

8 What is your approach to homophobia problems at school?

- Very uncertain
- Rather uncertain
- Neutral
- Rather certain
- Very sure

9. How would you rate your ability to talk to your co-workers about the "otherness" of their learners?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Average
- Good
- Very good

10. do you think you have enough knowledge to promote equality and prevent discrimination at school?

- Definitely not
- Rather not



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- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

11. How would you rate your ability to answer difficult questions and concerns from vocational students about LGBT+ issues?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Average
- Good
- Very good

12. How competent do you feel in creating LGBT+ educational materials?

- Definitely incompetent/
- Rather incompetent/
- Neutrals
- Rather competent/
- Definitely competent/competent

13. How would you rate your ability to provide emotional support to adult LGBT+ vocational students?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Medium
- Good
- Very good

14. do you feel ready to work with students belonging to the LGBT+ community?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

15 What are your expectations from the workshop? (Please briefly describe)

- _____

16 Have you encountered problems of homophobia in your school?

-Yes

-No



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17. How do you assess the effectiveness of your school's current anti-discrimination programs?

- Very ineffective
- Rather ineffective
- Neutral
- Rather effective
- Very effective

18 What challenges do LGBT+ students face at your school? (Please briefly describe)

- _____

19. To what extent do you feel understood by other vocational school teachers in supporting LGBT+ adult vocational students?

- Definitely misunderstood
- Rather misunderstood
- Neutrals
- Rather understood
- Definitely understood

Thank you for completing the survey!



Scenarios for the exercise:

A student who is gay comes to the teacher because he feels excluded by his classmates. He asks for help in finding ways to feel more accepted and safe at school.

Scenario 2:

A student who identifies as transgender faces incomprehension from co-workers. Co-workers in the work environment report to the teacher, seeking advice on how to better support their child.

Scenario 3:

A student participant experiences homophobic comments from some vocational students in class. He comes to the teacher, asking for intervention and strategies to deal with such situations.

Scenario 4:

The participant reveals himself as bisexual and fears the reaction of peers and vocational school teachers. He seeks support to be able to talk openly about his orientation.

Scenario 5:

A participant, a non-binary person, asks a teacher for help in changing the name and pronouns used in school. He meets resistance from the school administration and some vocational school teachers.

Scenario 6:

A lesbian student participant is the object of gossip and derision at school. She comes to the teacher for support in dealing with bullying and regaining her self-confidence.

Scenario 7:

Co-workers in the work environment of a student who identifies as transgender are opposed to his participation in school physical education classes according to his gender identity. They seek advice from the teacher on how to proceed.

Scenario 8:

A course participant reports to a teacher that he is being harassed on social media because of his sexual orientation. He asks for help in finding ways to deal with cyberbullying.

Scenario 9:

A course participant who identifies as asexual feels peer pressure to define his feelings. He comes to the teacher for support and advice on how to deal with this pressure.

Scenario 10:

A course participant who is gay asks a teacher for support in organizing a school support club for adult LGBT+ vocational students. He wants to create a safe place for himself and others, but fears the reaction of some colleagues and vocational students.



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Case Description:

Background of the situation:

A Class II high school student, Jacob, is a homosexual. Since his sexual orientation became known, he has noticed an increase in negative comments and behavior from his peers.

Identified problem:

Jacob experiences exclusion at school every day. His classmates have begun to avoid him, and some students use offensive comments and homophobic jokes against him.

Student emotions and reactions:

Jacob feels isolated and disturbed. His self-esteem has plummeted, and the stress of daily discrimination is negatively affecting his academic performance and general well-being.

Response of vocational school teachers and the school:

Teachers were unaware of the extent of the problem until Jacob reported the incidents to the educator. The school has an anti-discrimination policy, but its implementation is uneven and there is a lack of systematic action against homophobia.

Perspectives of the people involved:

Jacob: He wants his peers and teachers to recognize his identity and support him in his difficult situation.

Peers: They may not realize the negative impact of their actions on Jacob or may be influenced by stereotypes and prejudices.

Teachers: they should find ways to effectively implement anti-discrimination policies and support Jacob.

Proposed actions:

Education: Organize workshops for vocational school students and vocational school teachers on diversity and anti-discrimination.

Individual support: Providing Jacob with access to a school psychologist or counselor to help him cope with stress.

Intervention: Introduce and enforce anti-discrimination policies at school, including sanctioning inappropriate behavior and promoting respect for all vocational students.

Conversations: Conducting conversations with Jacob's peers to raise their awareness of the effects of discrimination and promote empathy.

Evaluation and monitoring:

Regular monitoring of Jacob's situation and evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented measures, with the possibility of adjusting the strategy if necessary.

Appendix 4.

Scenario: Conflict at School - Intolerance towards LGBT+ Student.

Background:

At the Golden High School, a conflict arose between a group of vocational students and Michal Kowalski, a student in Class 3C who identifies as gay. Michal began to speak openly about his sexual orientation, which was met with a negative reaction from some vocational students. Other students began to ridicule him, calling him derogatory names and excluding him from group activities.



Participants:

Michał Kowalski - a vocational school student of class 3C, gay. Michał experiences exclusion and harassment from his peers, which affects his well-being and academic performance.

Anna Nowak - a student of Class 3C, the leader of a peer group that ridicules Michał. Anna believes that Michał is "too sensitive" and "overreacts" to harassment.

Piotr Wisniewski - a vocational school student of class 3C, a member of the group that persecutes Michał. Piotr believes that Michał should "blend in with the crowd" and "stop drawing attention to himself."

Maria Zielinska - a teacher of education, a mediator who noticed the problem and decided to organize a mediation to help resolve the conflict and restore peace in the classroom.

Situation Description:

The conflict became so serious that Michael began to avoid school, and his academic performance deteriorated. Teacher Maria Zielinska decided to mediate to find a solution to the conflict and improve the atmosphere in the classroom.

Steps of the Mediation Course:

Case Registration:

We use a mediation case registration form to gather basic information about vocational students, describe the conflict and set preliminary mediation dates.

Course of Mediation:

The mediator (Maria Zielinska) arranges a meeting with Michael, Anna, Peter and other students who are involved in the conflict.

During mediation, the mediator uses active listening and para-phrasing techniques to make sure that each party has a chance to express their feelings and concerns.

The mediator encourages the parties to talk about their feelings in a "me" way instead of blaming others.

Solution Proposals:



Participants in the mediation discuss possible solutions, such as introducing diversity and tolerance training and establishing rules for mutual respect in the classroom.

The mediator helps develop an action plan that includes both specific commitments from vocational students and support for Michael, such as meetings with a school psychologist.

Performance Evaluation:

After the mediation, we fill out a form on the course and results of the mediation, documenting the findings, commitments of the parties and a plan for further action.

Evaluation:

Subsequent meetings are scheduled to assess how the arrangements have been implemented and whether the situation has improved. The mediator and students discuss progress and any additional support needs.

Documentation:

Case Registration Form: Contains basic data about the participants, a description of the conflict and preliminary arrangements.

Mediation Proceedings and Results Form: Documents the course of the mediation, the techniques used during the sessions, the proposed solutions and the final findings.



Thank you for participating in the workshop on supporting adult LGBT+ vocational students in schools. Please fill out the survey again to assess how well the training met your expectations and whether it increased your knowledge and competence in working with LGBT+ students.

1. How would you rate your knowledge of the LGBT+ community after the workshop?

- Very low
- Low
- Average
- High
- Very high

2. How often do you intend to cover topics related to gender diversity and sexual orientation in lessons after the training?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

3. do you feel confident in talking to students about LGBT+ after the workshop?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

4. How would you rate your ability to deal with discrimination issues in the classroom after the workshop?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Medium
- Good
- Very good

5. do you know where to refer fellow adult LGBT+ vocational students for help and support after the workshop?

- Definitely not



- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

6. How would you rate your peer mediation skills after the training?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Medium
- Good
- Very good

7. How prepared do you feel to create an inclusive and safe space for adult LGBT+ vocational students in the classroom after the workshop?

- Definitely unprepared
- Rather unprepared
- Neutrals
- Rather prepared/
- Definitely prepared/

8. How would you rate your approach to homophobia issues at school after the training?

- Very uncertain
- Rather uncertain
- Neutral
- Rather certain
- Very sure

9. How would you rate your ability to talk to your co-workers about the "otherness" of their post-workshop learners?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Average
- Good
- Very good

10. after the workshop, do you think you have enough knowledge to promote equality and prevent discrimination at school?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion



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- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

11. How would you rate your ability to answer difficult questions and concerns from vocational students about LGBT+ issues after the workshop?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Average
- Good
- Very good

12. How competent do you feel in creating LGBT+ educational materials after the training?

- Definitely incompetent/
- Rather incompetent/
- Neutrals
- Rather competent/
- Definitely competent/competent

13. How would you rate your ability to provide emotional support to adult LGBT+ vocational students after the workshop?

- Very weak
- Weak
- Medium
- Good
- Very good

14. do you feel ready to work with students belonging to the LGBT+ community after the workshop?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

15. were the expectations you had before the workshop met?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes



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- If not, why not? _____

16. Do you have a better understanding of the problems of homophobia at school after the training?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

17. How do you assess the effectiveness of the proposed anti-discrimination strategies after the workshop?

- Very ineffective
- Rather ineffective
- Neutral
- Rather effective
- Very effective

18. After the training, do you have a better understanding of the challenges faced by LGBT+ students in your school?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

19 Do you think that the knowledge and skills gained during the workshop will contribute to better integration and support of adult LGBT+ vocational students at school?

- Definitely not
- Rather not
- I have no opinion
- Rather yes
- Definitely yes

Thank you for completing the survey!

Your responses are very important to us in evaluating the effectiveness of our workshops and further improving the program.



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