

Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

Teaching diversity – be it racial, sexual, gender or any other kind – is about promoting the spirit of our Constitution. Introducing sexual orientation and gender identity into your teaching can help to challenge stereotypes and prevent bullying.

There are many ways to start conversations about diversity. The Constitution, active citizenship, social responsibility and personal well-being are key learning areas in the Life Orientation curriculum and can easily lead into discussions about sexual orientation and gender identity.

But these topics should not be limited to Life Orientation classes. One of the stated aims of the education system is the promotion of human rights, democratic values and Ubuntu, and so it is important to cultivate respect for diversity in all teaching areas. This can be as simple as acknowledging the variety of family structures that exist in South Africa, celebrating the contributions made by LGBTI individuals, or investigating how community attitudes shift over time.

Tips

Referring to the celebrities listed on the reverse of the poster is a great way to engage learners in the topic. There are also many LGBTI people who have played an important role in our history, such as Simon Nkoli or Zackie Achmat.

Remember that media representations can also be useful learning materials – a magazine, newspaper or advert can be a great way to explore gender representations or expectations. Even soap operas like *Isidingo* and *Generations* can inspire constructive discussions!



SAIH | Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund

For Teachers

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

The below activities can be used as a part of a cohesive lesson plan or as standalone exercises. They can be expanded, adapted or rearranged depending on the needs of your class, or on the time and resources available.

A. INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Welcome students and let them know that the topic of the lesson may be emotional and even controversial. Explain that due to our different backgrounds, we have different views on identity. It is important to formulate guidelines to make sure the classroom is a safe space in which to discuss these topics. Points to consider include:

- Being welcoming of different ideas and any disagreements
- Respecting the views of others
- Being honest when challenging problematic or discriminatory ideas
- Not blaming other people
- Speaking from experience rather than generalising.

B. ANALYSING PRIVILEGE

This exercise helps learners to understand how different forms of oppression are connected. List on a whiteboard the following identity categories: race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. Provide an accurate definition for each of these terms.

Ask learners to list the social groups that belong to each identity category. For example, learners can provide the following examples for the religion category: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and so on.

Explain to learners that some social groups have more privilege than others. Define privilege as 'unearned access to resources'. You can further explain the concept by using the example of racial privilege: white people generally have greater access to education, employment and other opportunities.

Revisit the lists for each identity category and ask learners to indicate which social groups have more privilege than the others. For example, who has more access to power in your community – men or women? Ask learners to share their thoughts on why this happens. Is it a good or a bad thing?

C. INTRODUCING SEXUAL & GENDER DIVERSITY

Read aloud and explain the definitions on the reverse of this poster. Make sure that the LGBTI acronym is understood and that learners are familiar with the terms 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity'. Invite learners to ask questions about the meanings of these terms and to share things they have heard about LGBTI people and their lives. Use the myths vs. facts table to correct any myths or misconceptions.

D. TALKING THROUGH DISCRIMINATION

Explain that homophobia and transphobia are forms of discrimination, just like racism and sexism. Discrimination of any sort impacts negatively on all members of a community, not just the targets.

Highlight that there is no one way that people experience discrimination. Personal experiences are based on a number of factors, such as race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, where the person lives, how much money they earn and so on.

Share the quote posted in the middle. These words were spoken by anti-apartheid and LGBTI activist Simon Nkoli at the first LGBTI pride march, held in Hillbrow in October 1990.

Encourage learners to reflect on this statement. What was Simon trying to say? Why is it important to draw links between different struggles?

Ask learners to share forms of discrimination they have experienced, witnessed or read/heard about. Were multiple factors involved? What factors might affect how a person experiences oppression? How might religion, culture and tradition impact on homophobia and transphobia?

E. CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

Split the class into four small groups and provide each group with some paper and pens. Allocate one of the following types of discrimination to each group: racism, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia.

Each group is given ten minutes to list all of the stereotypes associated with this particular form of discrimination. For instance, the group thinking about 'homophobia' could list the stereotype that lesbian women are trying to be men.

The groups then have fifteen minutes to discuss where they think these ideas come from. The discussion prompts below can be used:

- Where have you heard these stereotypes?
 - Why do you think these misconceptions are so popular?
 - What are the consequences of these stereotypes?
 - How can we challenge stereotypes – in our families, schools, communities and churches?
- Ask learners to share a summary of their discussion and to identify any similarities between the groups. Be sure to correct any myths or misconceptions.

F. EXPERIENCES OF LGBTI YOUTH

Read aloud the quotes on the reverse of the poster and ask learners to share how these make them feel.

Split the class into small groups. Allocate each group one of the role-play scenarios below (learners can also come up with an original scenario).

- A transgender learner asks her principal for permission to wear a different uniform.
- A young lesbian woman tries to talk to her family about her sexual orientation.
- A learner witnesses a classmate being bullied because of his sexual orientation.
- A same-sex couple tries to attend their matric dance together.

Allow fifteen minutes for the groups to develop their performance. Group members should discuss how people might behave in such a situation and why.

Ask each group to share their role-play. After each performance, the rest of the class can interview the 'characters' about their reactions or motivations. Encourage learners to investigate why the characters behaved as they did and to offer suggestions on how they could have better supported the young LGBTI person.

Ask each group to rework and re-perform their drama based on the class input. The revised drama must feature a positive and affirming outcome for the young LGBTI person.

G. CONCLUDE THE LESSON

Thank learners for participating respectfully in the lesson and summarise the key learning areas of the session:

1. All humans are different and these differences should be celebrated
2. All people need to be respected
3. Stereotypes are harmful
4. We all have a role to play in combating discrimination.

“Many of my friends in the ANC ask me why can't I shut up about gay rights and just fight for black rights. My friends can't I just fight for gay rights and forget this other struggle. This is what I say to them: I am black and I am gay. I cannot separate my struggle into primary and secondary struggles. They are one.”

Sharing accurate information is a powerful way to fight stigma!

Useful contacts

Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (Johannesburg)
011 717 4239
www.gala.co.za

Forum for the Empowerment of Women (Johannesburg)
011 403 1906

OUT – LGBT Wellbeing (Pretoria)
012 403 3272
www.out.org.za

Transgender and Intersex Africa (Pretoria)
012 430 2262
www.transgenderintersex.africa.org.za

Triangle Project (Cape Town)
021 686 1475
www.triangle.org.za

Gender Dynamix (Cape Town)
021 633 5287
www.genderdynamix.org.za

Durban Lesbian & Gay Community & Health Centre (Durban)
031 312 7402
www.gaycentre.org.za

Gay & Lesbian Network (Pietermaritzburg)
033 342 6165
www.gaylesbianksn.org

Legbo Northern Cape (Kimberley)
053 831 1313
www.legbo.co.za

The Commission for Gender Equality, the South African Human Rights Commission and the Department of Basic Education can also provide advice and guidance on issues relating to discrimination and bullying.

Copies of the Department of Education's guidelines for managing violence, bullying and homophobia can be provided by the Social Cohesion and Equity in Education Unit:

0800 202 933 or
www.education.gov.za

Hear Us Out www.hearusout.org is a website focused on LGBTI youth and education. It includes easy-to-download resources. Asiphephe www.asiphephe.org is a website focused on violence targeting LGBTI persons. It includes resources and a directory of support services.