

My ID Newsletter

Number 3
August 2020

This is the third newsletter of the SENSE-My-ID project. The project aims to integrate sensitivity for sexual diversity (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex – LGBTI - issues) in vocational training. In this project we focus most on vocational training in the social domain.



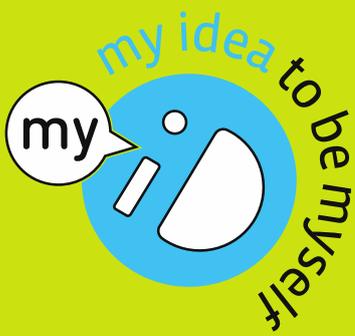
The project runs from January 2019 until May 2021. Products were prepared in 2019 and piloted in 2019-2020. In this newsletter we report on the **needs assessments** we did among students, the **trigger video clips** students developed and on our discussions of **how VET competences can be LGBTI sensitive**.

Impressions from the needs assessments

In each country, a needs assessment for the triggers and for the project as a whole was done. The intention was that this would be done by students interviewing fellow-students with a set of prepared questions that had to be asked at minimum. The standard questions insured that the assessments would also be comparable across schools and across countries to some extent. In this article we offer some impressions from the interviews.

VET Institutes as spaces for social learning

Safe schools provide environment for social learning. The interviews started with a general view of how the students experiences their vocational training and the institute that provided it. All students felt quite welcome and comfortable. Their answers showed how important it is that a vocational institute does not just provide technical training, but also creates a warm and supportive environment. Having sufficient contact with peers and with teachers was highly appreciated and many students wished there was more space for such contacts. "Some months ago I had a serious family issue and one of my teachers noticed that I was very sad, so he approached me to tell me that he was there for me, if I needed anything". (Greek student) "I like that I made new friends here and now we meet each other almost every day, even when we don't have classes here". (Greek student) When asked for their dreams, many students told about high ambitions, like become a famous chef, a TV star, to work at their national football club, to work in an American multinational, being a nuclear physicist, or to own their own hotel.



VET and sexual diversity

Opinions differed on whether VET should be sensitive to LGBT issues. A majority of the interviewed students though social issues should be part of VET, including diversity and sexual diversity. Some students preferred VET to remain “technical”. A few students were open to social learning but rejected attention to sexual diversity on religious (Catholic) grounds.

Only in the Dutch VET training, the students had noticed any attention to LGBT issues. This is mainly due to the teacher who chose to participate in this project.



Dutch publication about sexual diversity in VET

Most Dutch students already learned about LGBTI issues in secondary education; attention for sexual diversity and sexuality is mandatory in elementary

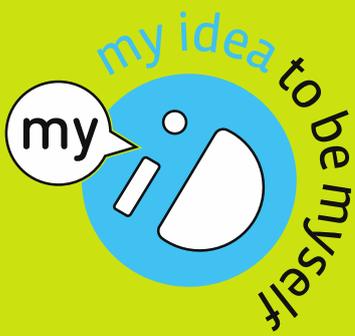
and secondary education in the Netherlands since 2012. In 2019 it also became mandatory in VET, but this is too recent for these students to have noticed. Dutch research show that very few VET trainings offer attention to sexual diversity or sexuality in general, even when this is quite relevant like in care setting.

Sexual diversity often misunderstood

Most students had heard about sexual diversity, but sometimes they did not fully understand what it was and their experiences with it were often limited. One student said “A man cannot be attracted to another man because they cannot have children together” (Greek student). Another Greek student said she thought “a balance should be kept between students. A straight student won’t come out as straight, so why should a gay student do so?”. Although words like “homosexual”, “gay” and “lesbian” were generally understood, concepts like “transgender”, “transsexual”, “transvestite” and “intersex” were mixed up or sometimes confused with “gay”. A trainer from Villa Montesca noted that sex, gender and sexuality definitions tend to get blended together by students. For example, when trainers of CESIE asked “what is your gender”, all students replied “heterosexual”.



Students often don't know what LGBTIQ mean



In Palermo, students were very critical of promiscuity, which they associated with “gay” and “bisexual”. They stated that “it is not fair to look for sexual satisfaction in both women and men if you can chose between one of the sexes, or to sleep with more than one person simultaneously, or to cheat on your partner” (Italian students). When asked whether they thought that heterosexual people were less promiscuous, they all replied positively. The Dutch and Spanish students were exceptions because part of them were gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender themselves.

How to serve an LGBT customer?

The students were also asked if they felt prepared to assist or serve an LGBT client or customer. Most students said that it does not matter whether their potential clients are homosexual or heterosexual.



Commercial for gay-friendly hotels in Canada

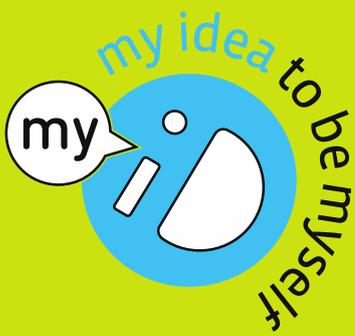
One Greek student said that it highly unlikely to have a non-heterosexual client, but that he would probably be very confused if he had to deal with one. Another Greek student said that she hadn’t thought about it, but she would probably act awkward if she had to deal with a non-heterosexual client. A Spanish student thought being LGBT is unnatural and against the law of god.

A dominant equality perspective

We mapped the intentions of students by asking them to choose between four possible ways to treat customers or clients: (1) I will be correct but aloof, (2) I'd rather not deal with them, (3) I will approach them just like other clients or clients, without considering their differences, and (4) I will take their specific situation and wishes into account. Researchers who developed this scale would consider option 1 as “modern homophobia, that is: not openly rejecting but keeping social distance. This is why this attitude is also called “tolerance at a distance”. The second option is considered as more traditional homophobia which relies on open rejection. The third option is called the equality perspective. It appreciates that people are, or should eb treated equal, but it does not take into account t that all people are different and that professional may need to be sensitive to diversity. For example, stating that it is “unbalanced” to come out as homosexual because heterosexuals don’t come out, supposes that the opportunities for heterosexual and homosexuals to talk openly and without fear about their partner are equal and free, which they are not.

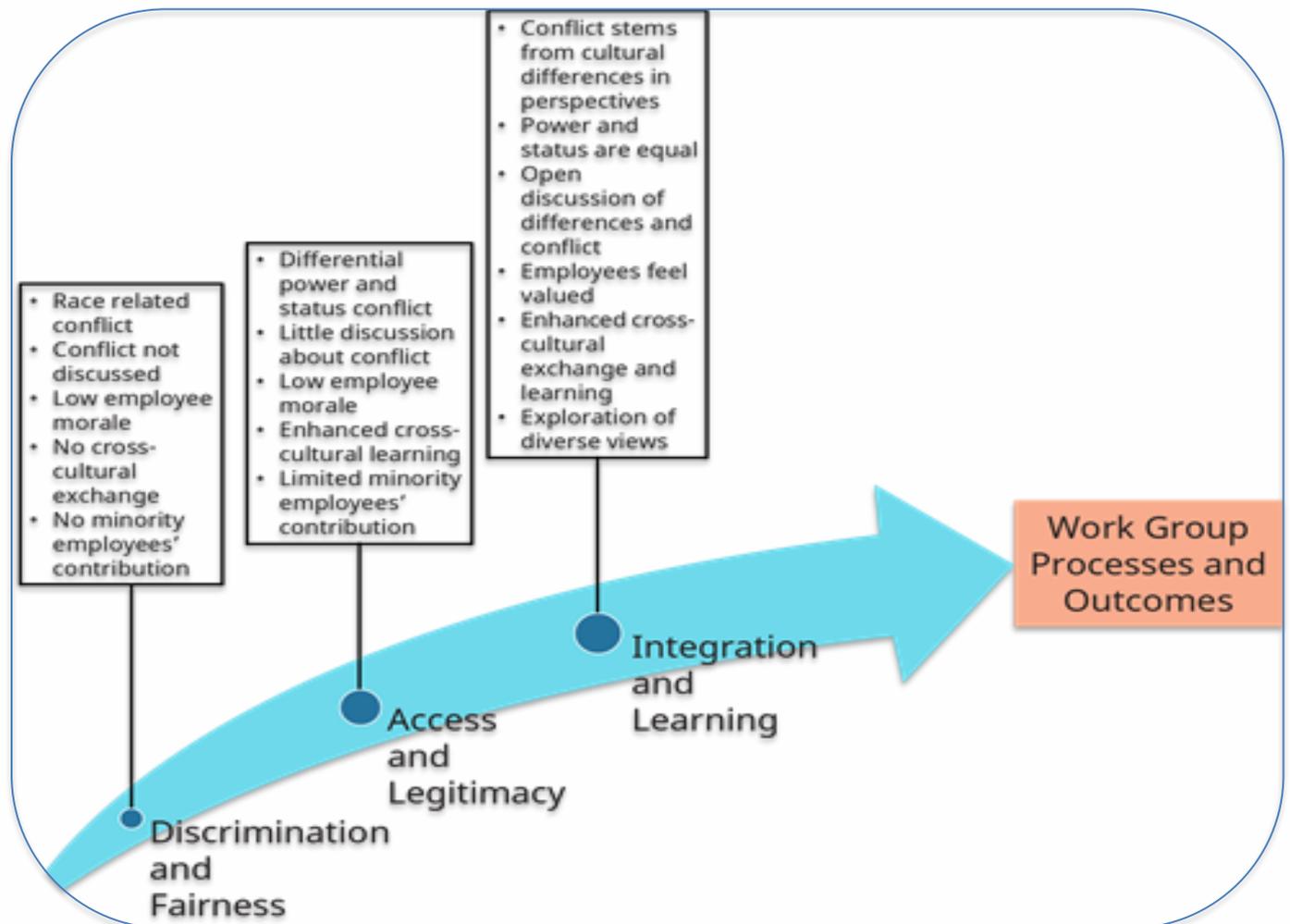


Equality perspective: may not acknowledge difference



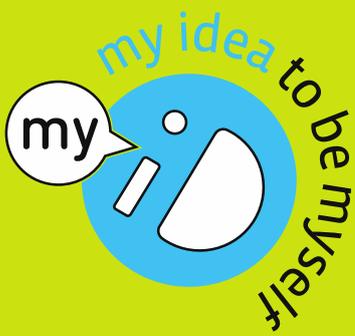
The fourth option is the diversity perspective: professionals are sensitive to specific needs and try to cater for these. A customer in a restaurant who is diabetic can legitimately ask for a sugar-free meal. A gay customer of a hotel near a gay area may ask for a late breakfast after he has been clubbing till 5 AM. Each of these may take extra effort, but that is what customer-friendliness entails.

The interviewed students mostly choose the equality perspective, while a few choose the first two options. Almost none chose the diversity option. This shows that the main thrust of the project should be on making students aware that true customer-friendliness requires not only equal treatment but sensitivity to a diversity of needs and how to cater for these. Next to this, VET institutions have to learn how to deal with a minority of students who hold traditional or modern homophobic attitudes.



Explanation on OpenStax of how a diversity perspective enriches workplaces

(<https://cnx.org/contents/u24tDxbQ@4/Benefits-and-Challenges-of-Workplace-Diversity>)



Passion and technical skills, more important than identity



CESIE worked with students of Euroform in Palermo on a stop-motion video to trigger discussion about sexual diversity in the training to be a chef de cuisine.

The video was entirely the idea of the students of the catering and agri-food industry classes of the Euroform Institute. They also produced the stop-motion video. After an initial brainstorming on topics like identity, diversity awareness, attitudes and prejudices against LGBTI+ at school, work and in general in life, the students designed and planned a video for the launch of an online awareness

campaign. The experts of CESIE coached the students in the process.

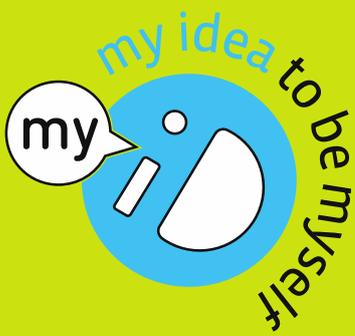
Stop-motion

Students develop a story line and searched images from newspapers and magazines to make the stop-motion film clip. The principle of stop motion is that the film is a collection of pictures filmed “frame-by-frame”. By shifting the images slightly each frame, the illusion of movement is created. When the images of the clip are completed, the students recorded their voices and edited the video.

Obstacles during vocational training

The story represents the dream of a student to become a chef de cuisine, but unfortunately he encounters obstacles due to being gay.





Discrimination and marginalization makes the protagonist feel unqualified and he feels distressed.



However, the clip shows how such distress can be overcome. The student reflects on the skills a student and a professional cook should have in order to realize their. These key skills are passion for job, technical skills, experience, dedication and creativity.



The protagonist realizes those skills are not linked to sexual identity and that his dream can be achieved regardless. This makes him feel also more empowered towards people who might say that a chef cannot be gay.

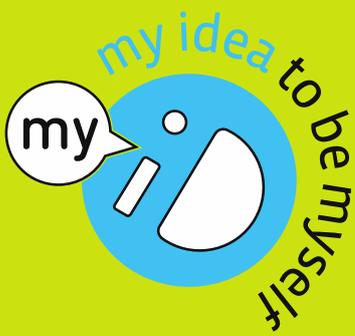


On December 16 (2019), the students of Euroform Institute presented the video to the students of other classes, and discussed the topic with the other students. Their next step was to launch the produced video online in February 2020 and to start an online awareness campaign that will involve all students of the Institute.

Link to the video: <https://youtu.be/w0zGYb5liKc>

The solid message of Città di Piero

The students of Liceo "Città di Piero - Istituto Tecnico Economico Fra Luca Pacioli" of Sansepolcro (Arezzo, Italy) wrote their own article on how they made a trigger video clip. "We wanted to make a video message that would be suggestive and create buzz in the school. It should be something that people talk about. And it should last over time - if we base it on a solid message."



Black and white versus colour

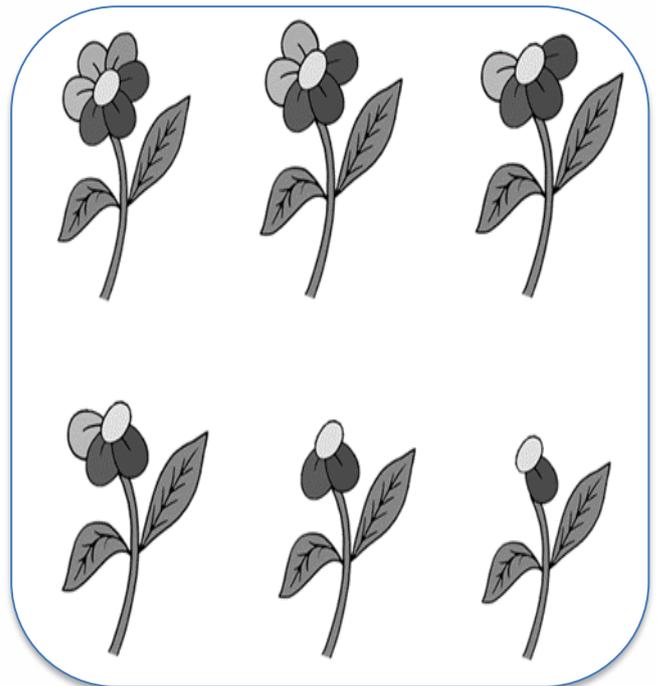
“Our clip starts with black and white images and they develop into coloured images order show both negative and positive perceptions. The sentences we have chosen aim to impress and capture the attention of the people as well as to deal sensitively with this issue. We decided to make the video in English so also other can enjoy it.”



My sexuality is not a trend

“The video starts with the introduction: ‘My sexuality is not a trend’. The clip shows a flower in black and white tones.

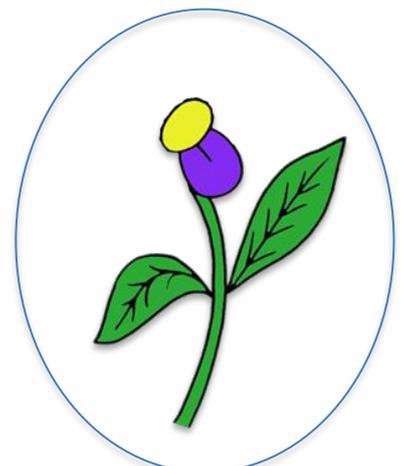
The stop-motion clip then shows how all the petals of the flower fall down.

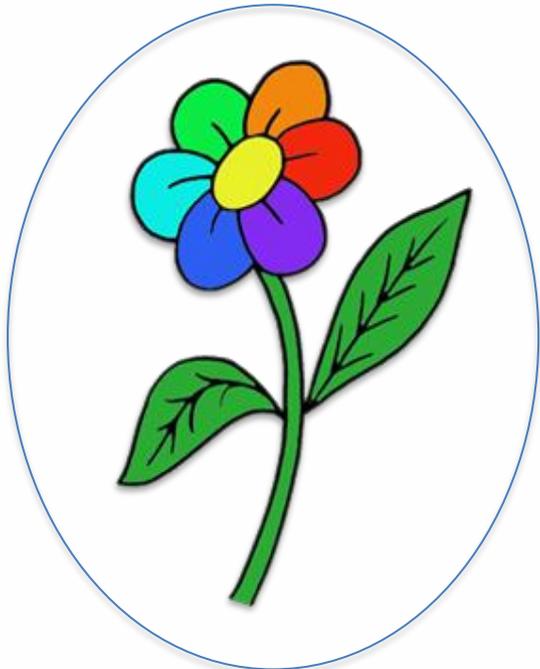
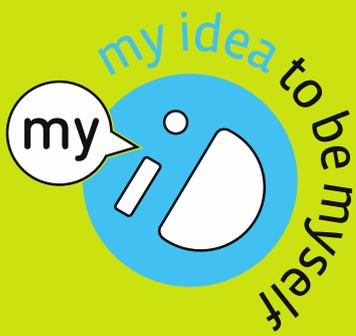


Then we see these statements::

- “I am gay” → “I am ~~gay~~”
- “I am straight” → “I am ~~straight~~”
- “I am lesbian” → “I am ~~lesbian~~”
- “I am bisexual” → “I am ~~bisexual~~”
- “I am transgender” → “I am ~~transgender~~”
- “I am asexual” → “I am ~~asexual~~”

With each statement, the flower’s petals are back and all in colour.





The clip ends with the pay-off: “I am human”. This way, we stress that labels can both be helpful and unhelpful.

The clip was developed by Sara Del Pia, Anna Fontanelli, Alessia Mariotti and Luca Tofanelli.

The partnership meets to discuss the competence framework

One of the main planned products of the partnership will be a competence framework which outlines how vocational competences can be sensitive to sexual diversity.

In the first half of 2020, the partnership had three meetings, the first meeting on January 10 in Città di

Castello, and to online meetings on June 16 and 17, and on July 9.

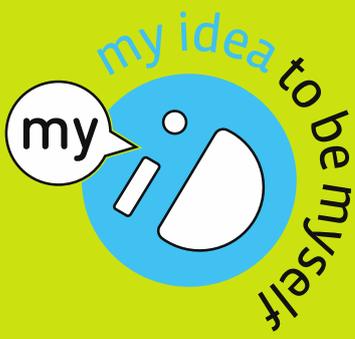
The competence framework describes the needed diversity competences of VET students and teachers. It will function both as an underlying model for the other products, and as a tool for discussion with the aim to improve the formal competence frameworks in the participating countries and regions.

In the meeting in Città di Castello, we discussed the originally proposed 22 general competences there were proposed by DEFOIN, and we made a selection of 12 key competences we want to focus on.



Teachers also need to have student level competences

During the discussion we noted that all the competences could relate both to teachers and students, with the main difference that teachers should not only have the same competences but also should be able to transfer knowledge, stimulate more adequate attitudes and train the relevant involved skills as well. It was agreed that all the competences apply to both groups, since teachers



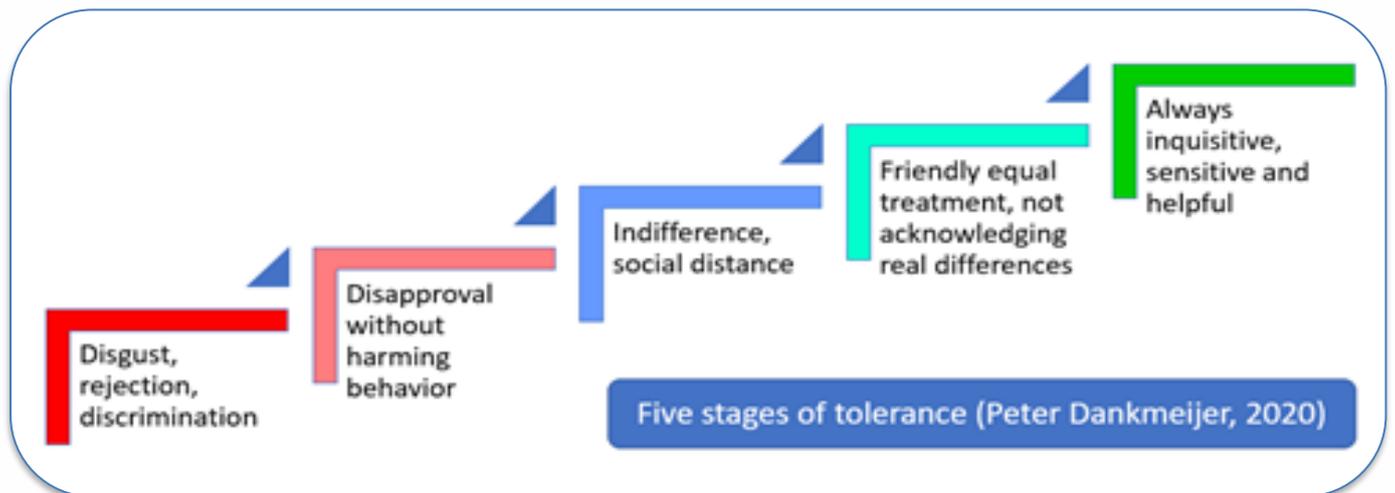
minimally require the same competences the students in order to be able to teach them.

“Tolerance”

In the first online meeting, the partners worked in 4 groups focusing on the definitions of the competences. They also worked provided examples for each of them to make more clear how they are relevant to LGBT issues in the classroom and in professions.

some levels of sensitivity may be helpful to clarify what we want to reach, step-by-step.

In the second online meeting, we agreed that the final framework would have 11 competences – 5 interpersonal and 6 intrapersonal. Again the team was divided in 4 groups to work on the examples for each of the competences by providing 2 examples: on how to include this competence in class and an example of when a VET student may need that competence when interacting with LGBTI+ people.



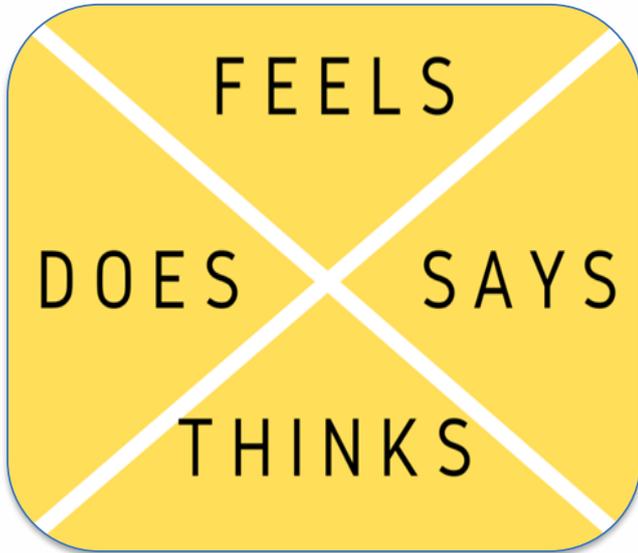
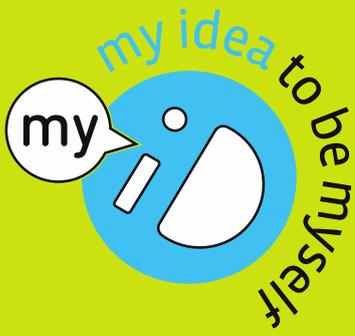
An example of levels of tolerance

For example, there was some discussion about the word “tolerance”. This can be seen as a high or low level of diversity sensitivity (“I accept you but don’t tolerate your expression of diversity”, or “I tolerate you but don’t really accept how you are”). Words like “tolerance” and “acceptance” may be understood in different ways, so they need to be explained or avoided. What we mean is that students have the intention to treat people in a sensitive way. It was suggested to distinguish between knowledge, attitudes, skills and professional behavior.

We also noted sexual diversity sensitivity may gradually grow. It was suggested that developing

For example, we identified “empathy” is one of the key intrapersonal competences. Empathy is a prerequisite for real understanding and tolerance; and it is different than pretending or tolerance-at-a-distance. It is very important that the group makes ground rules before discussing issues related to this topic, such as you don’t have to say anything, don’t be negative about comments others and keep private comments in the group.

As an example of how this could be trained with students, it was suggested to use the empathy map which helps students to chart what they feel, say thinks and does.



Empathy map

As a case study, students could be asked what would happen when they would work in a flower shop and a gay couple who is getting married asks you to prepare the floral arrangements for the wedding. The students can map their responses on different levels and discuss these. This is a low level and rather cognitive way of reflecting on empathy. There are other, more experiential activities that could be done to experience empathy, but we chose this one as an example because it's less emotionally threatening.

LGBTQ youth cultural competency of health workers

During our exploration of sexual diversity competences, we came across a 2015 dissertation by Megan Elizabeth Gandy who developed a measure (a survey) to assess LGBTQ youth cultural competency

of health workers. In this article we offer a summary of this interesting dissertation.

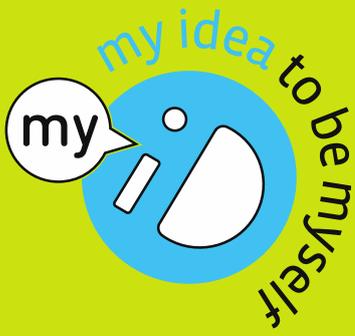
Open-minded

LGBTQ cultural competency is best conceptualized as a combination of knowledge, attitude, skill, and awareness rather than separating those concepts from each other. An issue that arises in this finding is the need to identify the *underlying latent construct* that is being measured. An examination of what items loaded highest on the measure indicates that the construct could be related to open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity, or having a client-led practice approach.

Rather than grouping the items by domain, perhaps they should have been grouped by direct-care worker activity (i.e., supervision; treatment plan implementation; redirection; discussion of sensitive subjects like sex, romance, and attraction; contact with family members; general management of the treatment milieu, etc.). This may better reflect where items are applicable because diverse situations require application of certain types of knowledge, attitude, skill, and/or awareness.

Openness to LGBTQ is a personal choice

Factors related to experiences and beliefs are more strongly related to this measure of cultural competence than are ascribed demographic characteristics. These personal choices and experiences of social contact, religious beliefs, and political ideology appear to be more important to understanding what influences LGBTQ sensitivity than are factors such as knowledge of organizational policies or perceived climate about LGBTQ individuals. Important factors depending on personal choice are for example the type of social contacts,



the belief that sexuality is a sin and political ideology.



The measure Gandy developed is related to general cultural competency, but not non-ethnic cultural competency. This suggests that the LGBTQ measure taps into a dimension that general cultural competency does not capture.

Adoption of sensitivity not dependent on a requirement

The measure is also related to workers' willingness to adopt evidence based practices, This suggests that workers' adoption of LGBTQ sensitivity is not dependent on whether they are a requirement. One explanation for this finding is that the motivating influence for workers to adopt LGBTQ sensitivity could be less about being required to do so and more about personal motivations.

Source: Gandy, Megan Elizabeth (2015). Assessing LGBTQ youth cultural competency in direct-care behavioural health workers: Development and validation of a measure. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, April, 2015

Colophon

SENSE-partnership (2020) *My ID Newsletter No. 3*, August 2020. Amsterdam: SENSE-partnership

More information on the SENSE-project can be found on <https://www.gale.info/en/projects/sense-project> and on <https://www.facebook.com/teachingMyID>. You can subscribe to this newsletter on <https://www.gale.info/en/news/subscribe-to-my-id-newsletter>.



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