

# **Towards Equality and Inclusivity in School: Policy Recommendations in the Fight Against Discrimination of LGBT Teachers**

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## **Executive Summary**

Despite the different guidelines released by the Department of Education towards equality for LGBT educators, there is still a pressing need for policies supporting LGBT teachers. Research shows that this group experienced discrimination and bullying that affect their lived experiences in school. This policy brief provides answers on the profile of gay and bisexual teachers along with their gender identity, age, length of service, educational attainment, teaching position, training attended, and other ancillary functions. The positive and negative lived experiences of educators in their workplace as well as the professional and personal responses to their lived experiences in school are also highlighted. This policy brief outlines the key recommendations on how school leaders, educators, and DepEd policymakers can mitigate discrimination against LGBT teachers in their workplace.

## **Introduction**

Equity is important in all dimensions of life. As such, learning institutions as the home of learning can promote inclusive schools (Wright, et al., 2019). However, the absence of educational policies, lack of knowledge, and resources and religious beliefs which are still practiced in the country brought persons of third gender vulnerable to discrimination and homophobic violence (Dela Cruz, 2015). However, the LGBT community is getting more accepted and recognized. In the Philippines, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) equality bill and the

Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Bill (CADB) have been filed but are not yet passed, hence not implemented.

Moreover, in order to address the increasing gender issues at school, DepEd Memorandum No. 27, s. 2013 (Guidelines and Procedure on the Establishment of DepEd Gender and Development Focal Point System), D.O No. 32, s. 2017 (Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy) and DepEd Memorandum No. 31, s. 2018 (Policy in the Implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education) was released to eradicate discrimination to LGBT people. But these policies, while helpful on

paper, have not been sufficiently enforced.

Looking at their implementation of the above-mentioned policies, they do not explicitly mention LGBT persons or SOGIE, which makes policies and programs not visible to address LGBT issues at school. Thus, LGBT individuals are left vulnerable to marginalization and social prejudice based on their gender identity or expression within educational institutions (UNDP, 2018).

This may be the reason why discrimination is still continuous in schools among LGBT teachers. According to UNESCO (2016), one of the problems across the world that LGBT individuals are facing is harassment and bullying. These individuals experience public ridicule, cyberbullying, physical assaults, and death threats. This occurs mainly inside the school premises where the school is supposed to be an institution for teaching and learning among students and teachers which dangerously affects them physically and psychologically (UNESCO, 2012).

Additionally, during the conduct of interviews and focus group discussions among the key informants of this study, LGBT teachers revealed that there is no school policy that protects LGBT teachers from any form of discrimination. As such, they experienced catcalling and other discriminatory practices and stereotypical perceptions from their respective places. Thus, the formulation of school and district policy that fights long time cry battle are badly needed and must be implemented strictly.

In addition, this policy brief is a great contribution in building and shaping school leadership. It serves as an eye-opener for every learning institution to achieve gender equality, end all types of discrimination, eliminate all forms of violence, and harmful practices, ensure effective participation and opportunities, and adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation. It serves as preferences on how school leadership can bring harmonious relationships with LGBT teachers who are considered the leading teachers by strengthening professional development for LGBT teachers, implementing a gender-responsive basic education, establishing supportive school policies that address gender-based barriers, and continuously conducting educational campaigns about sexual orientation and gender identity expression (SOGIE) in school and community that have positive effects towards school quality and improvement.

Therefore, this brief policy provided a wide-ranging baseline assessment of teachers' lived experiences. The key recommendations in this policy brief may serve as guidelines to improve the inclusivity and equality of school experiences for LGBT teachers in the schools through evidence-based solutions.

## **Key Findings**

### **1. The Profile of Gay and Bisexual Teachers in School**

In terms of gender identity, a range of options were given to

participants, and they were able to share their chosen sexual preferences.

When they were asked about their gender identity, they revealed that of the ten respondents, seven (7) of them indicated that they were “gay” while three of them were “bisexual”. Informants have different gender identities depending on what they felt and preferred. Overall, gay sexual orientation is at the top having the highest number of informants. When informants were asked about their age, teachers did not hesitate to share their years of existence. Only (1) of the 10 informants were aged between 30-35 years old, five (5) were aged between 36-40 years old, one aged between 41-45 years old, one was 46-50 years old, and two was aged between 51-55 years old. None of the LGBT teachers have age of 60 years old and above.

Likewise, the informants proudly shared their educational attainment in their teaching profession. Based on their stated responses, out of ten informants, six of them have masteral units, two have bachelor’s degree, one has doctoral units, and one with earned masteral degree. This may be attributed to their perceptions that the higher the degree they earned the more respect they gain from the community. And that when they learn more, the better learning delivery they could offer to their learners.

When informants were asked if they have attended training or seminars about gender issues, only three of the participants out of 10 have attended training. Most of them have no training

on gender mainstreaming. Though few of them have attended seminars about gender and development, the topic about LGBT issues is not included, thus, making them difficult in handling gender violence issues at school. Schools therefore must strengthen the professional development of teachers about gender mainstreaming to capacitate them in handling gender violence, discrimination, bullying, and other discriminatory practices that exist in school.

In terms of their length of service, five out of ten informants have a length of 11-15 years in the service. Meanwhile, three of them are in 6-10 years while two of them are 16 years and above. Meanwhile, when asked about their teaching position, of the ten (10) informants, six of them are Teacher III, gaining the highest number of participants. Meanwhile, three of them are Teacher I and only one is Master Teacher. The findings may be attributed to their educational attainment, where most of them earned masteral units. Likewise, their personal and professional knowledge, skills, competencies, and administrative support by school leaders may have big impact in their present position.

In terms of other ancillary functions, of the disclosed information by gay and bisexual educators, out of 10, only one is a school gender and development coordinator. This indicates that nine (9) of them are not handling GAD coordinators in their respective schools. As such, school heads may

assign GAD Coordinator to members of LGBT teachers who can easily identify the needs since it is related to their gender orientation and are experiencing issues and problems in terms of gender stereotypes in their workplace. According to Ladd (2013), individuals who have firsthand experience with the lives of LGBT people possess valuable expertise. Their unique perspective allows them to thrive in different domains, such as skillfully addressing gender-related matters, forging meaningful connections with people, and continuously enhancing

their performance through hands-on experience.

## 2. Lived Experiences of Gay and Bisexual Teachers in School

The researchers came up with two (2) themes in this study. These include the positive and negative lived experiences of gay and bisexual teachers in school are presented below. In addition, these two themes are divided into subthemes which are presented in Table 2a.

**Table 1**  
Lived Experiences of Gay and Bisexual Teachers in School

Positive Lived Experiences of Gay and Bisexual Teachers	Negative Lived Experiences of Gay and Bisexual Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Dedicated to work</li> <li>b. Level of gender disclosure</li> <li>c. Supportive school Head</li> <li>d. Supportive colleagues</li> <li>e. Supportive community</li> <li>f. Well-appreciated by others</li> <li>g. Passionate in teaching</li> <li>h. Professionally and Academically Competent</li> <li>i. Creative and Innovative</li> <li>j. Security in job</li> <li>k. Resilient</li> <li>l. Assets in school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Absence of school policy</li> <li>b. Discrimination by the community</li> <li>c. Discrimination by the pupils</li> <li>d. Discrimination by the colleagues</li> </ul>

### A. Positive Lived Experiences of Gay and Bisexual Teachers in School.

Gay and bisexual teachers are dedicated and passionate to work, professionally and academically competent, creative, innovative, and resilient. The study shows that they have dedicated themselves to work by exerting

extra time and effort to work in school. They are also passionate in teaching by showing love to their career. Moreover, they are professionally and academically competent. They are described as competitive, talented, versatile, brilliant, and determined in their workplace. This indicates that gender orientations do not

serve as hindrances in performing their duties as teachers.

Gay and bisexual teachers are also talented and creative in schools, particularly in organizing various affairs and events in school. Some are artistic in school planning while some are talented in designing stages, beautifying surroundings, and training skills of pupils in dance, arts, and others. Moreover, they have proven to be remarkably resilient in the face of adversity. Despite any obstacles that may arise in their professional lives, they persevere with unwavering determination, offering their utmost dedication in order to provide the best possible service to their students.

Moreover, gay and bisexual teachers have a supportive community, colleagues, and school heads. It shows that they are well-loved and supported by their school administrators. They were all accepted, respected, complimented, and were given tasks that are appropriate to their gender abilities and skills. They are also well-appreciated by others, are assets in school, and have confidence in their jobs. The study reveals that gay and bisexual teachers are happy and content with their chosen professions. They can act as guidance counselors, choreographers, and decorators to their learners and even in the different activities and programs held in their school. And they also served as comedians to their pupils and colleagues. Being a joker is one of the reasons why they are appreciated by the people around them.

## **B. Negative Lived Experiences of Gay and Bisexual Teachers in School**

The main reason why they still experience discrimination is that there is no law or school policy that protects them in school based from gathered data during the conduct of interviews to gay and bisexual teachers. There is no policy that has emphasized certain consequences whenever there is gender violence happening within the campus. Moreover, though there were discriminatory practices such as bullying experiences by educators, there are no recorded cases that are supposed to be the basis of providing intervention about the problems experienced by them in relation to their sexual identity in school.

Gay and bisexual teachers also experienced discrimination from their community due to their sexual orientation. Some are bullied while some experienced catcalling from parents. Some were also misjudged, while others were afraid to show his partner due to fear of discrimination by the community. Moreover, they experienced discrimination from their pupils and colleagues. Some teachers experienced catcalling while others have difficulty disciplining pupils due to pupils' belief that their teachers are members of LGBTQIA+ community. Some were insulted his sexual orientation by DepEd officials, while some were misjudged.

Moreso, another negative experience encountered by the informants is that they are afraid to be rejected by school and society. This is precisely why an informant in the study

made the decision to conceal their identity out of concern regarding potential rejection from their family, colleagues, and community. Others were afraid to be judged when they reveal their partner to the community.

### 3. Responses of Gay and Bisexual Teachers in their Lived Experiences in School

Based on the data gathered, there were suggested ways or coping mechanisms shared by gay and bisexual teachers on how they respond to their

lived experiences in their workplace. These are professional responses and personal responses. Professional responses include: formulating school and district policies, attending trainings and seminars about LGBT issues, enrolling for further studies, integrating LGBT issues in teaching, formulating LGBT coalition, and organizing school and district committees on gender violence. Meanwhile, personal responses include love of the profession, self-acceptance, resiliency, modesty, and support of school heads.

**Table 2**  
Responses of Gay and Bisexual Teachers to their Lived Experiences in School

Professional Responses	Personal Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Formulate school and district policies</li> <li>b. Attend training and seminars about LGBT issues</li> <li>c. Enroll for graduate studies</li> <li>d. Integrate LGBT issues in teaching</li> <li>e. Formulate LGBT coalition</li> <li>f. Organize school and district committees on anti-gender violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Love of profession</li> <li>b. Self-acceptance</li> <li>c. Resiliency</li> <li>d. Modesty</li> <li>e. School head's support</li> </ul>

The results indicate that professional mechanisms are vital in mitigating the discrimination experienced by lesbian and gay teachers in school. When these strategic actions were implemented it will work towards zero case discrimination, thereby, making school-community works towards equality and inclusivity. Moreover, the findings imply that the personal attributes of gay and bisexual teachers are strong tools to prove their worth as educators despite their sexual orientation. And that being LGBT member is not an indication

that you are not capable in your profession, but it is on how you deal with great character in your surroundings and on how you do your duties as a teacher.

As pointed out by Marshall and Hernandez (2013) professional development and training programs served as interventions to develop theoretical knowledge and practical intervention skills of teachers in making the school environments sexually inclusive to all diverse learners through effective school policy. Likewise, in the study conducted by Wright and Villaflor

(2019), they recommended that professional ethics must be there always. And that as teachers interact and engage with different people, they should learn to do more and to act ethically to protect their professions and for the benefit of the school and community.

### **Key Policy Recommendations**

1. Formulation of school and district policies that address gender-based barriers and protect LGBT teachers from any forms of discrimination. Research shows that a lack anti-discrimination policy for LGBT teachers is one of their common experiences in schools. This may also be the cause of continuous discrimination and bullying from their students, community, colleagues and even school administrators. Thus, school policies must be strictly implemented to build a safe and welcoming culture in school. By formulating this policy, it can mitigate marginalization and other forms of discriminatory practices, thereby promoting equality and inclusivity. Likewise, having an effective policy leads all individuals within the school environment LGBT teachers to shape their harmonious relationships with teachers that have a positive effect on school quality and improvement.

2. Organization of school and district-based seminars and training on LGBT mainstreaming education to capacitate them in handling emerging gender-related issues. The study reveals that LGBT there discrimination and gender violence were experienced by LGBT teachers. Thus, it is vital to strengthen training as an approach to promoting school

safety and reduce discrimination. Organizing such will capacitate teachers in addressing gender violence and develop theoretical knowledge and practical intervention skills of teachers in making the school environment sexually inclusive to all diverse learners. Though there DepEd Memorandum DO 27, s. 2013 - Guidelines and Procedure on the Establishment or DepEd Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Point System (GFPS) was released that gives teachers, pupils, and parents the opportunity to enhance skills on gender sensitivity training, and other updates on GAD-related laws, policies, and instruments, only a few of them focused on LGBT issues. As such, schools can undertake separate training that focuses on LGBT mainstreaming to capacitate teachers in handling gender issues thereby, making them powerful in protecting themselves, more so the students concerned.

3. Implementation of gender-responsive basic education by integrating LGBT concepts in teaching subjects to learners using gender-responsive learning resources for a safe and nurturing environment among LGBT teachers and individuals. While schools in are undertaking initiatives to integrate LGBT issues in the teaching-learning process, the study reveals that gender-responsive basic education policy is not properly implemented as there is an existing discrimination experienced by educators in the school from their learners, school heads, and teachers. These may be attributed to the lack of training, and seminars on how to integrate LGBT topics in teaching-learning process. Thus, the Department of Education may evaluate this policy to address its challenges in its

implementation. Moreover, in incorporating LGBT issues in teaching learners, gender-responsive materials may be reproduced to make school environment safe and inclusive among all LGBT teachers.

4. Organization of LGBT coalition in schools and districts to undertake programs and activities that empower them in their workplace. The study shows that one of the coping mechanisms of LGBT teachers in responding to their lived experiences is by organizing LGBT coalition in school. The creation of LGBT coalition may serve as a desk for LGBT educators to eradicate bullying and discrimination cases. Organizing such events can serve as veritable vehicles to conduct LGBT programs, activities, and projects that will empower them. With the existence of this group, LGBT teachers can undertake programs, projects, and other initiatives in school that can empower them as LGBT educators. School heads must support them in all ways to make them feel that they are supported, accepted, and loved.

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