



EMPOWERING LGBTQIA+ INCLUSIVITY IN EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This paper examines the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ students in the European Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector and proposes a set of policy recommendations aimed at enhancing their inclusivity and support. Grounded in recent research and in line with the European Commission's "LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025", this paper integrates initiatives from the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Education and Training (EVBB), including efforts to combat gender-based violence and discrimination against the LGBT+ community.

Introduction: The ongoing marginalization of LGBTQIA+ students in VET programs across Europe necessitates a reevaluation of current policies and practices. This paper aims to articulate strategic policy recommendations to address the challenges these students face, including discrimination, isolation, and bullying, significantly impacting their academic and personal well-being.

Literature Review: An extensive review of existing literature, including works by Borgonovi et al. (2023), Dankmeijer (2021), and McBrien et al. (2022), provides a foundational understanding of the disparities and challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ students in educational settings, particularly in VET. This review highlights the need for comprehensive policy interventions to create inclusive and supportive educational environments.

Methodology: The methodology involves a qualitative analysis of existing policies, strategies, and research findings related to LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in education. We also examine case studies and initiatives undertaken by organizations like EVBB (END GBV in VET project) and AKMI (UNIQUE project) to identify effective practices and gaps in current approaches.

Policy Recommendations:

1. **Standardization of Anti-Discrimination Policies:** Advocacy for EU-wide standardized policies against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in VET institutions.
2. **Mandatory Inclusive Education Training:** Implementation of comprehensive training programs for VET educators to enhance LGBTQIA+ awareness and sensitivity.
3. **Gender-Neutral Facilities and Policies:** Establishment of gender-neutral facilities and inclusive dress codes to reduce harassment and bullying.
4. **Targeted Anti-Harassment Campaigns:** Development of EU-wide campaigns focused on reducing harassment and promoting understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues.
5. **EU-Level Monitoring and Reporting:** Creation of mechanisms for monitoring and reporting the effectiveness of these policies across the EU.
6. **Collaboration with Advocacy Organizations:** Strengthening partnerships with advocacy groups to ensure policy effectiveness and community engagement.

Discussion: This section analyzes the potential impact of the recommended policies on improving the educational experience of LGBTQIA+ students in VET. It also discusses the broader implications of these policies on social cohesion and economic development within the EU.

Conclusion: The paper concludes by emphasizing the significance of these policy recommendations in fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable educational environment for LGBTQIA+ students in the European VET sector.

References:

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