

Learning Objective:

GET RID OF HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING IN EDUCATION

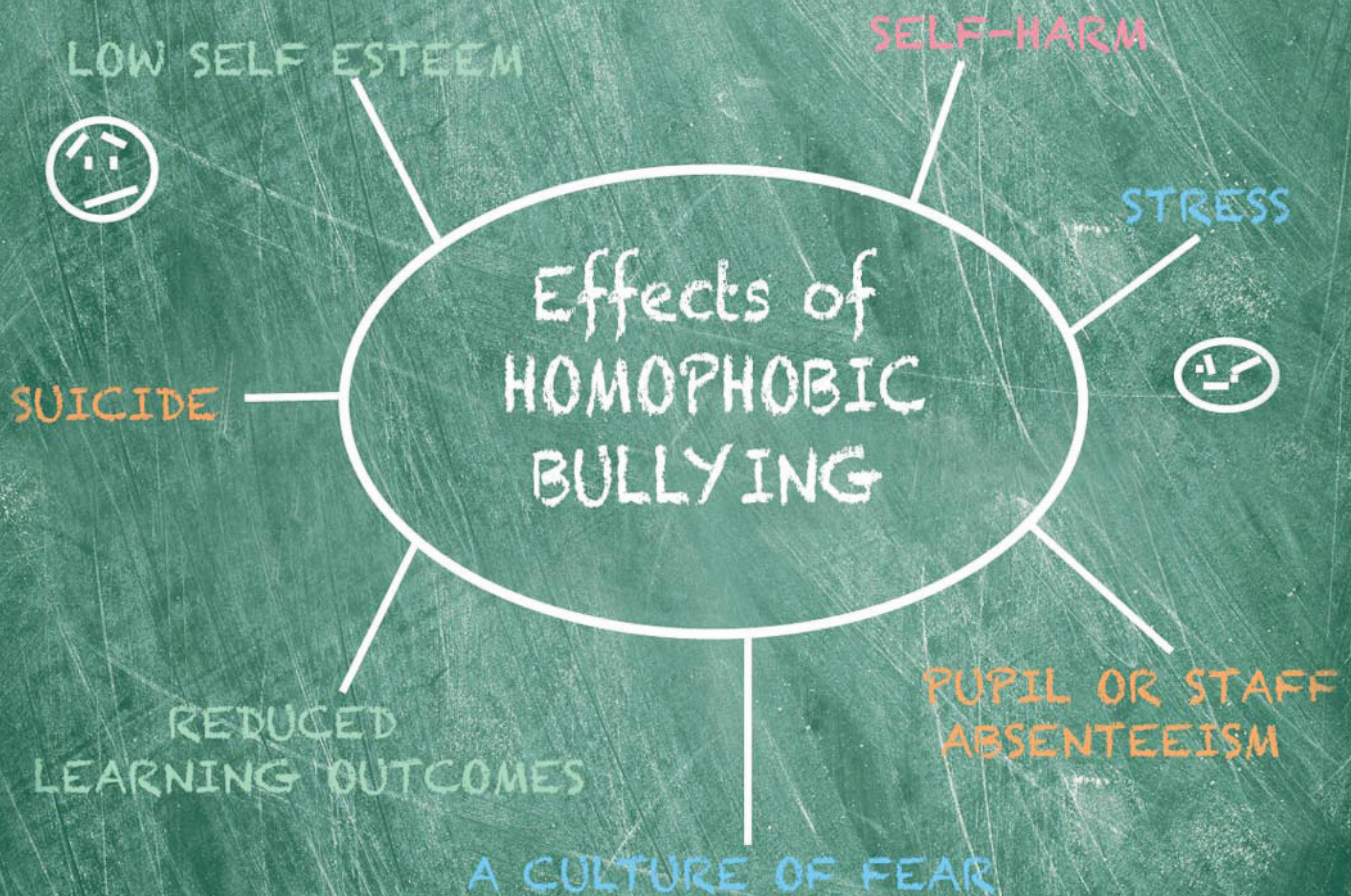
Everyone has the right to be happy where they work and learn.

HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING destroys this happiness!

"Teachers are rightly proud of our work and collective ambition to educate; address and correct ill-informed views, ignorance and bigotry—that is our wonderful job!

Delivering and promoting child protection is also key to that work— you cannot properly teach or learn in an environment that is not respectful and respecting of others."

—Simon Jones— Division of the NUT's National Executive Committee.



sportBU



Oriental Culture Educational Society



Dorset HealthCare University
NHS Foundation Trust



Bully-friendly or sporting excellence-friendly?

The challenge for schools, educational establishments and sports organisations to combat homophobia in the context of sports activities

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'It was the first month of my job as a newly qualified teacher. "I'd like you to coach girls' football. You'd be a good role model," the head of year said. "Why a good role model?" I asked. "Because you're straight – you're not one of those f- - king dykes." ...

I was speechless. This teacher knew nothing about me or my opinions, yet he still felt confident enough to make a series of assumptions: first, about my sexuality; second, that I would not be offended by his words; and third, that it was an appropriate statement to make in a staff room, surrounded by fellow teachers. This third presumption in particular implied a collective failing towards every child and adolescent at the school.

I did not have much experience, but I knew this was not right. I confided in various colleagues and tried to make a complaint. At every turn I was met with a similar response: "Oh I'm sure he was **just joking/he's just being a typical guy/don't take it so seriously**". Not one person I spoke to recognised the severity of what I had heard. The fact that **my colleagues and the institution itself appeared to collude, albeit passively, in this homophobia, made this all the worse.**'

Details about the very serious consequences of young lives marred and sometimes destroyed as direct and indirect results of 'teachers' of the kind noted above, 'just joking' and being a 'typical [prejudiced heterosexual] guy,' are revealed below, through for example research by the NASUWT that notes: **1 in 5 young lesbian and gay people attempted suicide because they were lesbian or gay.** Why – what part do prejudiced teachers have to do with such grim statistics?

‘Just being a Typical [prejudiced] Guy’?

In the details, above we meet with a **Real** teacher who encounters a more senior ‘teacher in name only,’ sadly demonstrating that his personal prejudices are more important than taking the time and trouble to be a genuine and truly professional teacher. Is this an exceptional occurrence? Sadly, no, it is commonplace: where homophobia is tolerated in schools, tolerance and indulgence of other forms of prejudice and discrimination, such as racism and sexism, are not likely to be unknown.

In the course of developing the Olympics legacy anti-homophobia in sport exhibition project we received multiple forms of confirmation that the professional and ethical perspective of the new teacher in the article, were rarely found, and that the unprofessional and unethical behaviour of the person/colleague she encountered, were much more typical.

The exhibition project revealed that in the Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole area it was not uncommon experience for some school PE teachers to:

- request gay and lesbian pupils to not use communal changing rooms, but ‘to change in the toilets instead’
- not happen to ‘easily remember’ the personal names of pupils who were gay or lesbian

Both are disturbing phenomena reminiscent of types of oppression and psychological bullying practised in Nazi Germany in the 1930’s and early 1940’s, as well as in countries in the early 21st century that have infamous records in oppressing lesbian and gay citizens due to religious extremist influences.

Significantly, in late June a formal invitation was given, by the official Bournemouth and Poole councils organisation that liaises with schools in the fields of the arts and sport, to all secondary schools/academies of Bournemouth and Poole to attend the private function launch of the project at Bournemouth Library in early August 2012, yet at that time only one responded and accepted the invitation.

Educational activity and the pursuit of knowledge run throughout our lives as a golden thread. Being a teacher is unquestionably one of the highest callings; all who are teachers in **fact** and not **name** only know this and it forms the life-blood of all of their work, dedication and struggles. In today’s world teaching is commonly regarded as a profession that brings a salary, confers a certain respected status and involves a practitioner being recognised as successful on the basis of how many of her/his students and pupils pass exams and attain certain grades.

Nevertheless, its high vocational nature and related duties remain honoured by many who teach. But not by all, as the experience of the female teacher above demonstrates all too well; it seems that it is in the area of sport in schools that homophobia, and to a certain extent racism and sexism as well, is especially prevalent, openly practiced and connived at.

The School Report: The experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools (2007):

http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/4004.asp

Stonewall School Champions Programme leaflet:

http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/school_champions_programme_2012.pdf

Costs of indulging intolerance and prejudice

'Teachers' who still are in thrall to conditioned/prejudiced thinking inherited from earlier pre-secular times when burning people to death was thought moral and entertaining, break and contravene the following; the Laws of **humanity and fairness**; the **ethical responsibilities of mentoring** children/youth; **the laws of professionalism** (especially quality assurance in terms of equality and diversity delivery; the **equality and anti-discrimination delivery legal requirements, contravention of which constitute grounds for dismissal and potential prosecution ; duties to broader society.**

School education is the preparation for becoming good, competent, self-confident and responsible citizens in adult life – qualities that are increasingly understood to make one far more employable.

Some of the consequences and costs of transgressing those laws and principles include [please see also see below in the Supportive Material and links section]:

- low self-esteem
- a culture of fear
- pupil indiscipline
- pupil or staff absenteeism
- reduced staff productivity
- staff turnover
- poor teaching performance
- reduced learning outcomes
- stress
- loss of health
- self-harm.

- 1) Mental health complications and suicides caused amongst LGBT youth referred to above – this dark legacy especially seen through negative experiences of school contexts bullying, and mental health matters.
- 2) Disruption of classrooms and even sports practice contexts which distract from dedication in the latter, and cause all pupils in the former to suffer from lack of professional teaching by the passive or positively supportive teacher who can't teach because of loud phobic pupils drowning out the reason for being in the class – not to bully and display inadequacy, but to learn and master a given subject taught without distractions. Consequences for all pupils/students in terms of school leaving attainments and employability – a small minority penalise All including themselves, not only their LGBT victims!
- 3) Because prejudices and bullying weren't challenged the prejudiced will have minimal chance of losing their discriminatory outlooks and behaviour patterns in adult/post school-college life.
- 4) The bullied will feel that they are second-class citizens

Please also see the final part of the supportive material and links section of the pdf associated with Panel 3 for further details of the costs entailed to the LGBT individual and society: *Why Steven Davies' coming out won't cure homophobia*

An E&D educational approach that in the year and years ahead will be increasingly used to help teachers [such as the person encountered by the new female teacher cited above] to teach better will be to highlight the personal costs to the phobic [or racist or sexist] disruptive child/youth of their behaviour. Namely, being increasingly regarded as socially incompetent and largely unemployable; prisoners of passions that belonged to more ages in which ignorance was encouraged and the ability to be a self-confident individual denied.

Clearly the most important contributions that can be made to remove these blights lies with those responsible for the day to day direction of schools and colleges; their heads/principals and as importantly, their managers, whose responsibilities for ensuring E&D legal requirements are met and related audits ensure they meet required standards to continue to operate.

A teacher is required to educate, enlighten and inspire yet also to give pastoral support, to help a child navigate through possibly the most challenging and daunting time of his or her life. How can a homophobic teacher deal with the myriad problems young people face, especially incidences of homophobic bullying among the pupils?

Blackburn with Darwen NUT launched its first Prevalence of Homophobia Survey of primary teachers with a foreword by Ms Gladys Rhodes OBE (Strategic Director of Blackburn Children's Services). At the launch held in Blackburn, Simon Jones Division Secretary and member of the Union's National Executive Committee said:

"Teachers are rightly proud of our work and collective ambition to educate; address and correct ill-informed views, ignorance and bigotry - that is our wonderful job! Delivering and promoting child protection is also key to that work - you cannot properly teach or learn in an environment that is not respectful and respecting of others."

Source: <http://www.schools-out.org.uk/>

Supportive material and links.

We see that there is a real transformation of education in the UK state sector that has in multicultural, multiracial Britain seen a shift away from RE [religious education] being seen as the only – 'morality-based' – guide about ethical conduct, to instead more objective equality and diversity driven good citizenship ethics of the kind not known in the West to a certain extent since classical times.



In early 21st century Britain there appears an increasing degree of consensus around the importance of inclusivity and dissatisfaction with the costs intolerance and discrimination cause to the individual (such as the suicide of Dominic Crouch [featured above with his family] whose story is detailed in a link provided towards the end of this section) and society, as the following details testify:

Full Guardian online article concerning prevalence of homophobic attitudes in schools:

It was the first month of my job as a newly qualified teacher. "I'd like you to coach girls' football. You'd be a good role model," the head of year said. "Why a good role model?" I asked. "Because you're straight – you're not one of those fucking dykes."

I was speechless. This teacher knew nothing about me or my opinions, yet he still felt confident enough to make a series of assumptions: first, about my sexuality; second, that I would not be offended by his words; and third, that it was an appropriate statement to make in a staff room, surrounded by fellow teachers. This third presumption in particular implied a collective failing towards every child and adolescent at the school.

I did not have much experience, but I knew this was not right. I confided in various colleagues and tried to make a complaint. At every turn I was met with a similar response: "Oh I'm sure he was just joking/he's just being a typical guy/don't take it so seriously". Not one person I spoke to recognised the severity of what I had heard. The fact that my colleagues and the institution itself appeared to collude, albeit passively, in this homophobia, made this all the worse.

The real tragedy in this, of course, was not the offence that I felt; it was the fact that this teacher had significant influence over hundreds of teenagers.

A good number of these young people may have been straight, some may have been beginning to question their sexuality, others may have been gay or have had family members and friends who were; but regardless of this, every single one of them needed to learn in an environment where bigotry and intolerance were not welcome.

A YouGov poll, commissioned by Stonewall, discovered that 43% of secondary school teachers have heard homophobic comments from their colleagues. Today no teacher who made racist remarks would escape widespread rebuke; so why is homophobia still tolerated?

A teacher is required to educate, enlighten and inspire yet also to give pastoral support, to help a child navigate through possibly the most challenging and daunting time of his or her life. How can a homophobic teacher deal with the myriad problems young people face, especially incidences of homophobic bullying among the pupils?

For a child, the school setting needs to be a place where all forms of bullying are challenged and steadfastly rejected. Teachers are the key agents in ensuring that this is the case and young people must be sure of equality and acceptance in the eyes of their educators.

The scale of discrimination in schools:

The following details from the Schools Out website reveals alarming statistics. In effect 35% of teachers are either indifferent to making schools safer and more inclusive, or actually oppose making them so. This is evidence of thoroughgoing unprofessionalism, and the fact that this large minority of teachers are not safe and competent guides and mentors to LGBT and potentially other minority group (BME) pupils and students during the latter's key formative years.

Source: <http://www.schools-out.org.uk/>

65% of teachers call for training to make schools safer and more inclusive places in which to teach and learn

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On page eight of the survey you will also find the current synopsis of similar surveys of secondary teachers that endorse earlier popular and learned studies revealing the culture of homophobic abuse that is 'endemic' (School Report 2007 - Stonewall) within our school system.

The School Report: The experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools (2007):
http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all/quick_links/education_resources/4004.asp

NUT Prevalence of Homophobia survey results:

Homophobic bullying may lead to:

- low self-esteem;
- a culture of fear;
- pupil indiscipline;
- pupil or staff absenteeism;
- reduced staff productivity;
- staff turnover;
- poor teaching performance;
- reduced learning outcomes;
- stress;
- loss of health;
- self-harm.

1 in 5 young lesbian and gay people attempted suicide because they were lesbian or gay.

Dominic Crouch's story: 'I'm so, so sorry for what I'm about to do'

After he kissed a boy during a game of spin the bottle, Dominic Crouch, 15, leapt to his death. His suicide galvanised his father to campaign against homophobic bullying:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/feb/19/dominic-crouch-homophobic-bullying-suicide>

NASUWT Tackling Homophobic Bullying report:

http://www.nasuwat.org.uk/consum/groups/public/@equalityandtraining/documents/nas_download/nasuwat_000233.pdf

Homophobic Bullying in Youth Sport:

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/cpsu/resources/briefings/homophobic_bullying_in_youth_sport_wdf81288.pdf