

Gay-Straight Alliances at schools

Colophon

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Table of contents

Colophon.....	2
Introduction	4
Summary	5
Detailed description	5
1. Outline of the problem	6
2. Description intervention	8
3. Substantiation.....	20
4. Execution	27
5. Research into practical experiences.....	31
6. Research into the effectiveness	34
7. Bibliography.....	38

Introduction

This document describes the intervention *Gay-Straight Alliances at schools*, as it was developed by COC Netherlands, documented for the effectiveness process of the National Institute for Public Health and Environmental Protection (*Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu*; “RIVM”). This effectiveness process of the RIVM is aimed at enforcing Dutch lifestyle interventions and stimulating the quality of the youth (health) care and advancement of healthcare. COC Netherlands has outlined this in its current intervention *Gay-Straight Alliances at schools* and substantiated its report with scientific facts with the help of knowledge centre Movisie. A process evaluation was done before this process took place, whereby COC researched the scope and practical applicability, documented the success and failure factors and had the activities and materials assessed by users. An independent committee of the RIVM has ultimately assessed that the intervention *Gay-Straight Alliances at schools* is “well substantiated”. This meant that the intervention was the first one aimed at LGBT youth in the Netherlands that has been assessed by the RIVM as being effective.

The first chapter outlines the problem, we will discuss the situation of the LGBT-pupil in the Netherlands and details the scope, spread and consequences of the problems LGBT youth are faced with. The second chapter describes the intervention following three flow charts. The substantiation of the intervention is discussed in chapter three. The risk factors and protective factors are listed and substantiated. Everything is listed in an overview, linking the approach, method and activities with each other. The fourth chapter deals with the execution of the intervention and the materials available, quality-control and the peripheral conditions. You can find the research conducted in the Netherlands and North-America and the extensive list of sources are provided in the last chapters.

Summary

Target group

Ultimate target group: LGBT pupils in secondary education. Intermediary target groups: pupils in secondary education (both LGBT and non-LGBT), teachers and school management.

Goal

There is a positive standard with regard to sexual and gender diversity (LGBT) which makes the school climate safer for LGBT pupils.

Approach

Pupils and teachers in secondary education are encouraged to set up Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs). GSAs are groups of LGBT and non-LGBT pupils who together make sexual and gender diversity visible, a topic to discuss and carry out actions aimed at making the school climate safer for LGBT pupils. Pupils are approached via social media, advertisements and COC's Jong&Out (for LGBTs of 12 through 18 years old). Teachers are approached via GSA teacher discussions, at educational meetings and social media. The central message conveyed in the activation is: there is a problem because LGBT pupils don't feel safe in school. You can do something about it and it is not difficult: start a GSA. The first step to do this is ordering an action package on the campaign website www.gaystraightalliance.nl. The action package is free and includes start up material (manuals and campaign material). A pupil will then seek other pupils to start a GSA together. The pupils and the teacher(s) will then meet and plan activities. They can find tips for activities in the manuals and on the website. If plans are made, the school management is informed and the activities can be performed, possibly with their support. GSAs arrange or provide information themselves on sexual and gender diversity, make sexual and gender diversity visible and a topic of discussion and offer support to LGBT pupils. GSAs are autonomous and are given material to work with, if necessary supported by COC.

Material

Campaign website(s) with clips, games and information on GSA, action packages with manuals for pupils and teachers, fact sheets for confidential counsellors, school management and teachers, GSA manifest, GSA petition, campaign material (posters, flyers, stickers and wrist bands) and the GSA lesson package.

Substantiation

LGBT youth are dealing with an unsafe school climate. They are often negatively approached, cannot be open about being LGBT, don't have the possibility to share their experiences and are not supported in their school environment (Goodenow et al., 2006; Nicholas et al., 2006). Environment focused theories on collective change of behaviour show that individuals who together form a community are the best forces to achieve changes in that community by way of a process of empowerment (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Zimmerman, 1990). This empowerment theory is recurrent in the whole approach and immediately starts when reaching out to and activating pupils and teachers to set up a GSA. Once a GSA has been set up, the members will perform activities for the ultimate goal to create a safer school climate for LGBT pupils. In order to achieve this, the negative approach toward LGBT pupils must be dealt with (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Greytak et al., 2013; Kelleher, 2009; Link & Phelan, 2001; Meyer, 2003; Toomey et al., 2011), the social support must be improved and social network must be mobilised (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Goodenow et al., 2006; Heaney & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011; Mayberry, 2006; Szalacha, 2003), and the social standard must be that it is alright to be LGBT and to be open about it (van Bergen & van Lisdonk, 2010; Bandura, 1997; Felten & Boote, 2012; Goodenow et al., 2006; Greytak et al., 2013; Heaney & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011; Lee, 2002).

Research

Practical research has shown that the target group is reached to a good level and that the pupils are satisfied about the promotional and informative material offered by COC (up to 2013 505 of the 680 secondary schools in the Netherlands were approached with the intervention). However, finding sufficient members, thinking of creative new promotions and dealing with negative responses to the GSA is considered a difficult aspect (Enzerink, 2013; Ricardo, 2013; van der Velden, 2011). American effectivity studies into GSA show a correlation between the presence of GSAs at high schools and experiencing bullying or violence as a result of sexual or gender identity (Goodenow et al., 2006; Greytak et al., 2013; Szalacha, 2003) is considerably less, and that absenteeism due to feelings of fear are also considerably less (Goodenow et al., 2006; Greytak et al., 2013; Toomey et al., 2011) and that the psycho-social wellbeing is significantly higher (Heck et al., 2011; Toomey et al., 2011).

Detailed description

1. Outline of the problem

Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) at secondary school can be pretty difficult in the Netherlands. Research conducted in recent years has shown how precarious the situation is for LGBT. In an unsafe school climate LGBT pupils are faced with a negative attitude and behaviour with regard to sexual and gender diversity (*Inspectie van het Onderwijs*, 2009). Many of the research we refer to below are specifically focused on homosexuality/bisexuality and less is known about the situation for transgender youth. We will always specify below whether this information apply for the whole group of LGBTs or just a part thereof.

Since December 2012, secondary education schools must discuss sexual and gender diversity during the first years of school. However, research has shown that the information is provided as a solitary subject, is not structural and has little coherence with the rest of the curriculum, causing the subject of sexual and gender diversity to be insufficiently imbedded in the school context and school policy (Mooij, 2012). Mooij (2012) considers that a better realization of the school (safety) policy can be achieved by allowing the pupils to participate, for example by establishing and following school rules and codes of conduct.

Approximately 18 percent of Dutch women says that they are (also) sexually attracted to women. 13 percent of men says that they are (also) attracted to men. Approximately 13 percent of women and 13 percent of men has had sex with someone of the same gender. Approximately 4 percent of men refers to themselves as gay and 3 percent of men refers to himself as bisexual. Approximately 3 percent of women refers to themselves as lesbian and 3 percent refers to themselves as bisexual (Keuzenkamp, 2006). In a school with 1000 pupils and a 50/50 division of boys/girls, approximately 90 girls will (also) be attracted to girls, approximately 30 girls will (later) refer to themselves as lesbian or bisexual; approximately 65 boys will (also) be attracted to boys and 35 boys will (later) refer to themselves as gay or bisexual (Felten, 2012).

Research conducted among pupils shows that large numbers of them have difficulty with homosexuality; only 5% of all the pupils says that you can come out of the closet in front of everyone in school (Keuzenkamp, 2010). Heck et al. (2011) have stated that experiencing negative response at school is related with feelings of being unsafe. Many LGB youth in the Netherlands are confronted with an unsafe school climate (Keuzenkamp, 2011). The *Inspectie van het Onderwijs* (2005) has confirmed this and says that these youth are discriminated against because of their homosexuality, resulting in an unsafe climate at school. This unsafe situation threatens the development of LGB youth.

Bullying of LGB pupils because of they are LGB greatly contributes to an unsafe school climate. Approximately three quarters of LGB youth are faced with bullying and other homophobic expressions. 'Homo', for example, is one of the most frequently used swear words at secondary school. Particularly gay boys who behave very feminine and lesbian girls who behave very masculine are the target of negative expressions (Keuzenkamp et. Al., 2010). In addition to the bullying, LGB pupils are also subject to a significant amount of violence at school, much more so than non-LGB pupils, and we have seen a rise in that violence in recent years (Mooij, 2012).

LGBT pupils are particularly feel that it is unsafe to be themselves. They postpone being open about them being LGBT, their coming out; on average it takes over three years after having first discovered that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual before they dare to come out of the closet as being lesbian, gay or bisexual (Keuzenkamp et. Al., 2010). Gay and bisexual youth are on average 12.6 years when they first become aware of their sexual preference and lesbian and gay girls are 13.5 years old (van Bergen & van Lisdonk, 2010). Transgender adults who were born as a boy were 14.1 years on average and persons born as a girl 12.4 years old when they realized their gender identity differs from their birth gender (Keuzenkamp, 2012).

LGB youth indicate that the problems they experience mainly take place in the school environment (Keuzenkamp et al., 2010). The school management is often insufficiently aware of the problems faced by LGBT pupils (*Inspectie van het Onderwijs*, 2009). LGBT pupils are not visible to them and the problems experienced by these pupils are insufficiently brought to their attention. After all, if the pupils stay in the closet, as stated above, they will not or cannot be able to refer to the unsafety they experience with regard to their sexual preference or gender identity.

Spread

Pupils at approximately half of the secondary schools say that they do not wish to discuss homosexuality openly and at least one third of the secondary schools is dealing with incidents involving sexual and gender diversity (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2009).

There are indications (GGD Rotterdam, 2005; GGD Amsterdam, 2012) that the feeling of unsafety is greater for certain groups than for other pupils: pupils with an ethnic background, pupils with a religious background, and pupils with a lower level of education. Boys are often more negative about sexual and gender diversity than girls (GGD Rotterdam, 2005, GGD Amsterdam, 2012). Various research has been conducted in the cities, and it seems that relatively more boys are negative about lesbians, bisexuals, gays and transgenders. We also see that ethnic minority youth adopt a less positive attitude towards homosexuality than native youth (GGD Rotterdam, 2005). A similar research conducted in Amsterdam showed that Turkish and Moroccan youth are four to five times more likely to adopt a negative attitude towards homosexuality than native youth (GGD Amsterdam, 2012). In Amsterdam it has become clear that pupils attending preparatory secondary vocational education (*voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*; “vmbo”) are four to five times more likely to adopt a negative attitude towards homosexuality than pupils attending senior general secondary education (*hogere algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*; “havo”) (GGD Amsterdam, 2012). This would imply that the feelings of unsafety among LGBT pupils at vmbo-schools is greater than among the LGBT pupils attending havo and pre-university education (*voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*; “vwo”). It is striking that LGB pupils with a higher level of education have a lower self-acceptance than LGB youth with a lower level of education (Van Bergen & Van Lisdonk, 2010).

Hardly any quantity research is available with regard to LGBT youth with a multicultural background. However, various projects conducted in this field show that this group of youth are often faced with serious problems, including honour related violence from the family (Pierik en Meinster, 2008; Felten & Bakker, 2012).

Consequences

The unsafe atmosphere LGBTs experience at school because they cannot be open, being bullied and not feeling supported is associated with negative effects on their psychological wellbeing, physical health and performance at school (Toomey et al., 2011). Heck et al. (2011) state that experiencing negative response at school contributes to the development of psychological problems, such as stress, depression or suicide.

Young LGBTs experience tension and stress as they must learn how to deal with minority stress (Meyer, 2003; Kuyper, 2011). After all, they must try and find their way within a school where they are not the norm, and that affects their psychological wellbeing. One third of the homosexual and bisexual boys and one tenth of the lesbian and bisexual girls say that they would prefer not being LGB (De Graaf, Kruijer, Van Acker, & Meijer, 2012).

Depression and suicidal tendencies also occur more frequently among LGBT youth (Felten & Boote, 2012). The SCP report *Steeds gewoner, nooit gewoon (increasingly normal, but never normal)* (Van Bergen & van Lisdonk, 2010) shows that 50% of all lesbian, gay and bisexual youth have experienced suicidal thoughts at one time. 9% of all homosexual and bisexual youth and 16% of the lesbian and bisexual girls have actually carried out a suicide attempt. In comparison with a Dutch study conducted among 18 to 25 year olds in 2006: 11.2% of the youth have considered suicide at one point and 3% has made a suicide attempt. No research has been done among transgender youth in the Netherlands, but research conducted in France shows that 69% of the transgender boys have considered suicide at one point, and that 34% have actually carried out a suicide attempt. The figures of research conducted among adult transgenders shows that more than two thirds have considered suicide at one point and 21% actually carried out a suicide attempt (Keuzenkamp, 2012).

The American Journal of Public Health has published a Dutch research which shows that there is a clear link for LGBT youth between bullying and suicide plans and attempts of LGBT youth (Van Bergen et al. 2013). Youth with low self-esteem, boyish girls and girly boys, bisexual youth and youth with a religious upbringing consider suicide more often (Keuzenkamp, 2010).

2. Description intervention

2.1 Target group

Ultimate target group

LGBT secondary education pupils are the ultimate target group of the intervention. The school climate must become safer for them.

Intermediary target group

1. Secondary education pupils in general:
 - a. Heterosexual and cisgender pupils (non-transgender pupils)
 - b. LGBT pupils

The intervention is ultimately aimed at achieving a climate in which LGBT pupils feel safe. In order to reach this goal, we focus on all secondary education pupils who wish to speak out for a safe school climate for LGBT pupils. This can therefore be LGBT pupils and non-LGBT pupils.

2. Secondary education teachers and other educational staff

Teachers are used in the intervention to activate, guide and support the alliance of pupils. Besides guiding the GSA, they are also the persons who decide on the content of their lessons and on whether or not to include information provided by COCs or GSAs in their lessons or to use the GSA lesson package. We mainly focus on teachers, but other educational staff, such as care coordinators, janitors or those responsible for the roster can also adopt the role of GSA supporter.

3. School management of secondary education schools

It is important for the GSAs to be able to rely on the support and consensus of the school management. The goal is to have the school management make a clear statement against LGBT discrimination and to include a LGBT friendly school climate in its policy, for example by structurally offering education on sexual and gender diversity or to use the GSA lesson package in the school. The school management can also support the GSA financially.

Selection of target groups

The intervention has been set up in such a way that various groups of youth can use it. The information we offer is extensive enough for havo and vwo pupils and easy enough for pupils of practical education and vmbo. In practice the GSAs determine their own goals. The practical education/vmbo pupils will be given more assistance than the havo/vwo pupils (by GSA supporters). In recent years, GSAs have been set up in all types of education. There is, for example, a GSA in a school for the deaf. The material has been translated in English for use at international schools. The material offered by COC is being used by first year, third year vmbo and sixth year vwo pupils.

2.2 Goal

Main goal

There is a positive standard with regard to sexual and gender diversity (LGBT), making the climate at school safer for LGBT pupils.

Sub goals per target group:

Pupil level

LGBT-pupils

1. have a social network within the school
2. have an LGBT network for sharing experiences and recognition
3. accepting their own sexual and gender diversity and not being afraid to be open about this
4. have good social skills
5. know how to deal with negative responses
6. request help

Non-LGBT pupils

7. express themselves positively with regard to sexual and gender diversity (LGBTs)
8. are more knowledgeable on sexual and gender diversity (LGBT)
9. know LGBTs at school
10. know how to respond to sexual and gender diversity (LGBTs)
11. support LGBTs at school

School level

School management/teachers

12. know more about sexual and gender diversity and the problems faced by LGBT pupils
13. do not tolerate bullying and stigmatization of LGBT pupils
14. intervene in the event of (excessive) responses and behaviour in respect of LGBT pupils
15. make LGBT issues visible and a topic during lessons and adopt a positive attitude toward LGBTs/sexual and gender diversity
16. organise social support for LGBT pupils

2.3 Approach

Set up of the intervention

The goal of the intervention is to activate, support, help and unite pupils (and teachers) in order for them to make sexual and gender diversity visible and a topic in their own school environment. They will achieve this by way of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs): clubs of LGBT and non-LGBT pupils supported by teachers and other educational support staff. These GSAs can undertake various activities that suit the reasons why they set up the GSAs. These activities can be split up into three categories: (1) activities aimed at education on sexual and gender diversity, (2) activities on the visibility and ability to discuss sexual and gender diversity, (3) support for LGBT pupils. GSAs mainly operate at pupil-level; they will enter into the discussion together. GSAs are set up by the pupils and the teachers. COC will implement a continuous campaign in order to make pupils and teachers in secondary education aware of the intervention and to stimulate them to set up a GSA. COC also offers support to GSAs by providing them with the information they need, providing advice (directly or on the website), by providing knowledge (COC education, lesson package) and to enable GSAs to come in contact with each other, for example by organizing GSA days.

The setup of the intervention is described below in three flow charts. The first flow chart describes the activation process of the pupils and teachers. The second describes the setup of a GSA by a pupil or a teacher. The last flow chart details examples of activities of the GSAs and the possible support offered by COC.

table 2.1 Flow chart activation

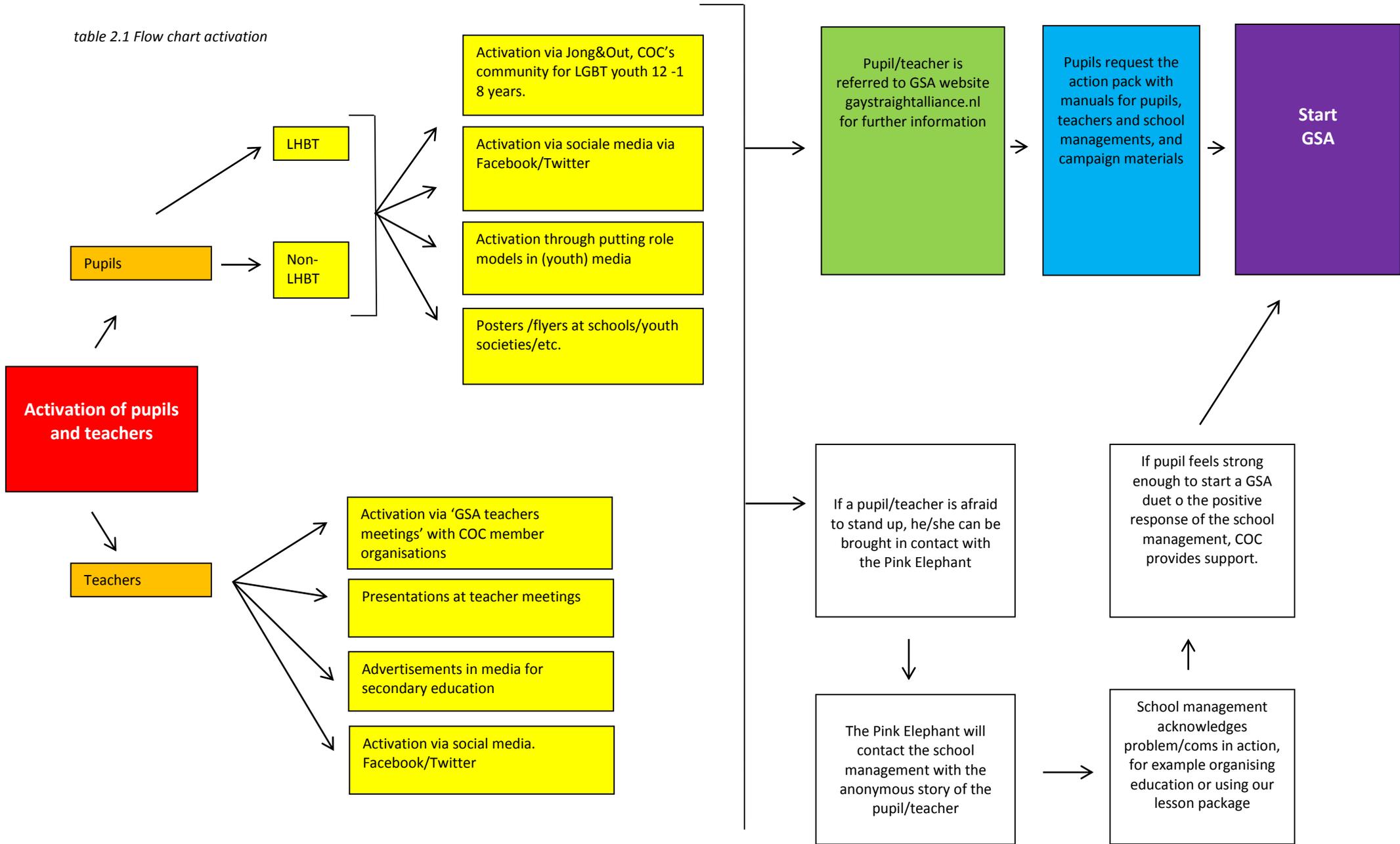
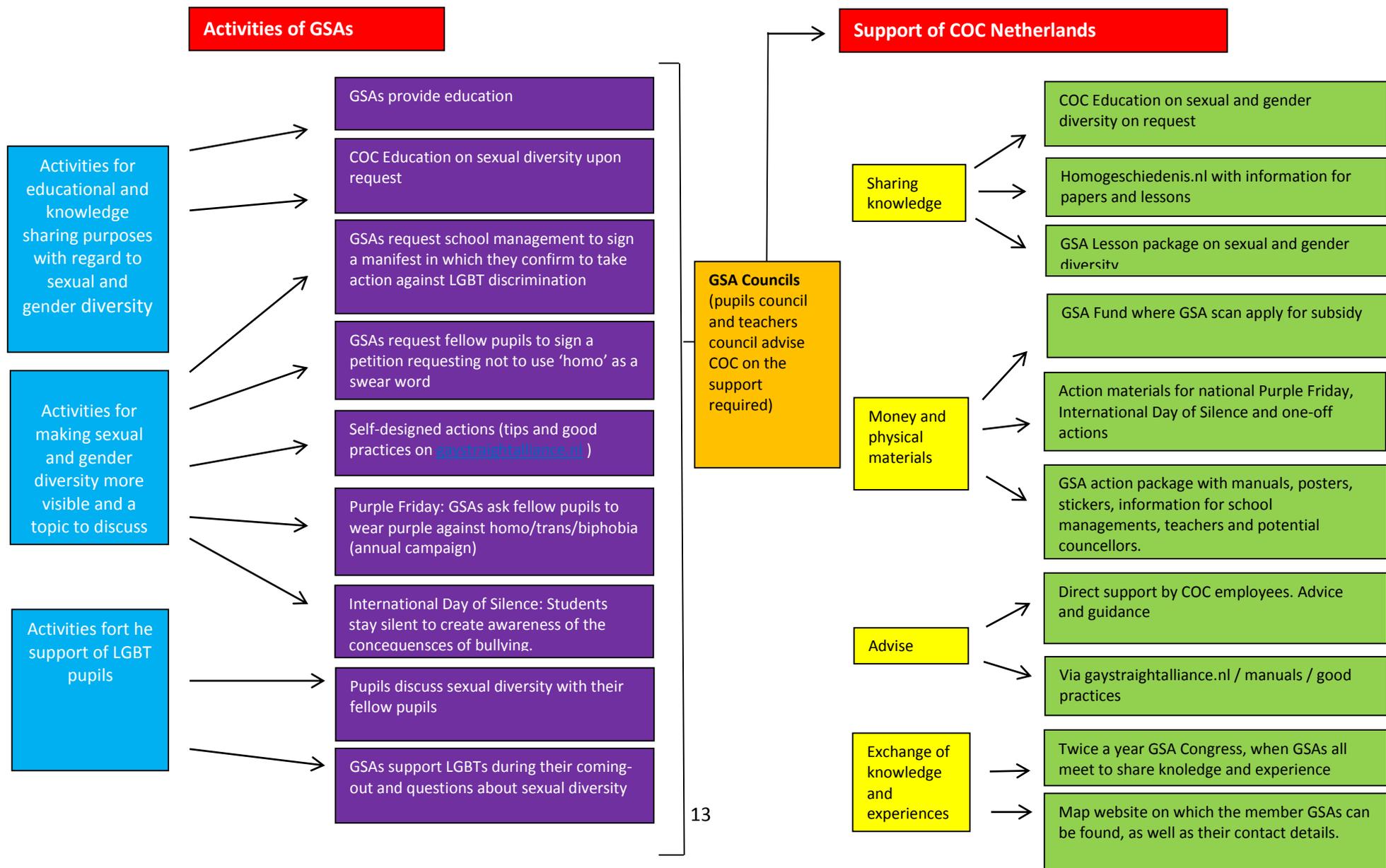


table 2.3 Flow chart with examples of activities and possible support COC



The flow charts mentioned above explain the process from activation through to the performance of the activities by the GSAs. How long does it take for pupils and teachers to set up a GSA, to perform activities and the number of activities that GSAs perform vary greatly. The process depends on various factors, such as: how many pupils are prepared to take part in the GSA? Are there LGBT youth in the school who have had their coming-out? To what extent is the school management involved and does it provide support? GSA is very explicitly a framework in which pupils and teachers can work as they see fit. The goal is to have them take responsibility to engage in improve the climate regarding sexual and gender diversity and in doing so contribute to a safer environment for LGBTs. This means that GSAs determine their own goals. Some GSAs will therefore be more focused on education, others will be more 'activist' and will execute actions, while others will emphasize the support of LGBTs. How long a GSA is maintained can also differ greatly. Some GSAs will perform one big action and others will exist for longer. Often the people taking the initiative leave school and the GSA is maintained by the supporting teacher who will then seek new pupils who want to be in a GSA.

Location and executors

The intervention is performed by 3 groups:

- Pupils (location: secondary school)
The pupils are the key executors in this intervention. They will enter into the discussion on sexual and gender diversity with the coaching and supporting teachers in their environment (the secondary school). The pupils and the coaching/supporting teachers together form the GSAs.
 - Teachers (and other education support staff) (location: secondary school)
Also teachers mainly have a supporting and facilitating role. Teachers activate, help, support and coach the GSAs at the school. We address teachers, but also janitors, those arranging the rosters, care coordinators and other education support staff can fulfil this role.
 - COCs or other supporting organisations
The intervention is supported by COCs and can also be supported by other social organisations. COCs and other interest groups. COCs and other interest groups activate, support, help and help youth at a distance. This support takes place outside the school environment.
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Content of the intervention

The content of the intervention is described below on the basis of the three flow charts on the preceding pages:

1. Achieving and activating pupils and teachers to set up a GSA (table 2.1)
2. Setting up a GSA (table 2.2)
3. The activities of GSAs (table 2.3)
4. The support from COC (table 2.3)

1. Reaching and activating pupils and teachers to set up a GSA

In order to motive pupils and teachers to set up a GSA they are informed via various channels of the concept whereby the central message is: there is a problem, because LGBT pupils don't always feel safe at school. Directly followed by: but you can do something about that together with others, and it is very easy.

Pupils

Pupils are informed of the existence by GSA with specific communication aimed at the target group and light but direct, on places where the target group is located offline and online. LGBT pupils are mainly targeted via Jong&Out; the network of LGBT youth up to and including 18 years old (this is supported by COC Netherlands). This is one of the main channels to activate youth; the ultimate target group is after all the group that experiences the most problems and is therefore the most prepared to take action. Besides specifically targeting LGBT pupils, all the pupils (LGBT and non-LGBT) are reached via social media campaigns (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram), advertisements in youth media and posters that have already been distributed via COCs and are possibly already posted at youth centres and school. This method is referred to as *persuasive communication* (Kok et al., 1996 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and is combined with *empowerment* in the form of *collective problem solving* (Zimmerman, 1990): pupils and teachers are encouraged to take action and to collectively take charge of the safety in their school. They are encouraged to do so by emphasising in the communication that setting up a GSA and taking action is easy.

Teachers

Teachers are reached by similar means as the pupils. Advertisements are placed for this group (in educational media) and use is made of social media. Educational meetings are organized and COC organizes GSA teacher meetings. These meetings are chaired by the COC and two teachers already working with GSA. This method is referred to as *modelling* (Bandura, 1997; McAlister et al., 2008; Rogers, 2003 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and clarifies the GSA approach to this target group by providing clear examples and explaining the desired action. During the GSA teachers meetings, we discuss what you could do to make sexual and gender diversity a topic at school, whereby the GSA teachers present provide practical examples. The meetings are light and intended to activate teachers to support a GSA at his/her school.

Website

Interested pupils and teachers are referred to the campaign website www.gaystraightalliance.nl where they will see three clips in which youth explain why you need to start a GSA and a game about what a GSA is. This is a combination of two methods, i.e. transfer of information by the clips (Schaalma en Kok, 2010 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and active learning (Bandura, 1986) by using the game. The site has all the information pupils and teachers need to set up a GSA, from a step-by-step plan through to examples of activities. These activities show what a GSA can do and are presented as 36 *good practices* introduced and developed by and for youth. The applied method is called *modelling*: by using practical experiences and tips of the pupils and teachers involved it is explained why a GSA is important, what it means and how little effort it will take for you to get involved. Finally, GSAs can apply on the map, and can get into contact with other GSAs in the country. According to the social cognitive learning theories this technique, also *modelling*, is a suitable way of encouraging someone to take action as it shows who are already taking part (Bandura, 1997; McAlister et al., 2008; Rogers, 2003 in Bartholomew et al., 2011).

Requesting the action package

Website visitors can request a GSA action package at www.gaystraightalliance.nl, which constitutes the first real step for actually setting up a GSA. The action package contains the materials to start setting up a Gay-Straight Alliance (see chapter 4 for an overview).

The manual for pupils and teachers adopt a 5-step plan plus tips of GSA youth. The step-by-step plan is: (1) make a group, (2) plan a meeting, (3) make plans together, (4) inform the school management and (5) execute your plans. The 5-step plan is presented to the pupils in a comic depicting the start-up phase of a GSA. This comic is a form of *behavioural journalism* (McAllister, 1991; McAlister et al., 2000; Ramirez et al., 1995, 1999; Reiniger et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011): stories about role models are used to show the desired action. The GSA petition and GSA manifest are methods aimed at *agenda setting* (Cobb & Elder, 1983; Sabatier, 2003; Weible, 2008; Weible et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and *advocacy and lobbying* (Christoffel, 2000; Galer-Unti et al., 2004; Kingdon, 2003; Wallack et al., 1993; Weible & Sabatier, 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011). *Advocacy and lobbying* by using the GSA petition and/or the GSA manifest means that GSAs gain active support for their position against discrimination and bullying of LGBTs by way of argumentation and mobilization. A GSA engages in *agenda setting* by having the subject LGBT placed on the 'agenda' of pupils, teachers and the school management.

Posters, stickers and flyers in the action package make it possible for teachers and pupils to work at changing the social standard in the school by applying *entertainment-education* or *edutainment* (Bandura, 1997; Bouman et al., 1998; Moyer-Guse, 2008; Petraglia, 2007; Rogers, 2003; Wilkin et al., 2007 in Bartholomew et al., 2011). The messages on the posters, stickers and flyers are education and light at the same time. That is what educational entertainment is: communication that suits the target group and is serious and light at the same time.

The action package also contains fact sheets with tips for teachers, confidential counsellors and school management on how to deal with sexual and gender diversity in the area of policy, what to do in lessons, how to deal with questions of LGBT pupils etc. This method can be used to change social standards and is referred to as *mobilizing social networks*: social networks, encouraging one to provide support, in the event of the GSA by providing information emotional support and encouragement (Heaney & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011).

The Pink Elephant

Pupils that (still) feel safe enough to come out of the closet and take actions themselves can contact the Pink Elephant. The Pink Elephant will engage in a conversation with the school management on behalf of the pupil, whereby the pupil remains anonymous. By telling the story of the pupil, the Pink Elephant tries to start a process at school that eventually leads to the school taking action against homo/bi/transphobia. In many cases the pupil will come out of the closet and the Pink Elephant tries to activate the youth to set up a GSA at school. This pupil can then request a GSA action package. The Pink Elephant as method is based on the social cognitive theory on *facilitation* (Bandura, 1986): the creation of an environment in which it becomes easier to take action.

2. Setting up a Gay-Straight Alliance

The application of the action package can be seen as the start of the process to set up a GSA. If the initiative for a GSA is taken by a teacher, then the teacher will seek pupils (and possibly other supporting teachers) who want to set up the GSA. After all the teachers provide support within the GSA. Pupils who set up a GSA will need to look for other pupils, LGBT and non-LGBT to set up a start group. They can do this by visiting the other classes to ask people to join, to place a message on intranet or the message board and of course the action material from the GSA package. The group (LGBT pupils, non-LGBT pupils and teacher(s)) meets and will draw up a plan. To this end they can use material from the action package, the website with examples of activities, the manual and think of new actions themselves. Once the plans have been devised it is advisable for a GSA to inform the school management of the plans. After all, they can provide the support and approval for the visibility actions within the school. As the GSA has drawn up the plans and informed the school management, the plans can be performed. This approach is a combination of the methods *participatory problem solving* (Butterfoss, Kegler & Francisco, 2008; Cummings & Worley, 2009; Minkler, Wallerstein & Wilson, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and the forms of an alliance (Butterfoss, 2007; Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) in order to engage in a joint purpose action.

3. Activities GSAs

Ultimately the intervention revolves around what happens here: the activities performed by the GSAs themselves. The activities of the GSAs themselves are geared towards changing the norm in the school. With all the tools they are provided with they can deal with the gender norm and hetero norm. They make sexual and gender diversity visible and take a stand for LGBT youth. The activities are subdivided in three categories. In order to achieve the goals of the intervention, it is important for the GSAs to perform at least one action within each category. After all, they can choose which action they take, the pupils (and teachers) of the GSA as they know which action works best in their environment.

1. Activities for educational purposes

GSAs can provide information themselves or can have this done by COC educators. Educators of COC can be invited to give a lesson about sexual and gender diversity. Both these lessons focus on knowledge about sexual and gender diversity and attitude. Educators tell their own personal story and enter into discussions by using discussion methods. This method combines *empathy training* (Batson et al., 2002 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and *interpersonal contact* (Pettigrow & Tropp, 2006 in Bartholomew et al., 2011). *Empathy training* is a method that reduces stigma and focuses on stimulating people to empathise with the stigmatised person (in this case LGBT) by sharing personal stories. *Interpersonal contact* takes place during the education, because this allows non-LGBT pupils to come into contact with people from the stigmatised group LGBTs. When the GSA provides the education we also refer to this as *modelling* (Bandura, 1997; McAlister et al., 2008; Rogers, 2003 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) because role models are used in order to share own experiences. These role models can also strengthen the social support and social networks, as they are considered *natural helpers* (Eng et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) or frontrunners.

2. Activities for the visibility and discussing of sexual and gender diversity

This can be all sorts of activities which the GSA uses to enter into the dialogue with their environment, for example by offering the GSA petition to fellow pupils or the GSA manifest to the school management. The GSA can learn from the clips on staoptegenhomofobie.nl how other GSAs speak out against LGBT discrimination. This approach is based on *modelling* (Bandura, 1997; McAlister et al., 2008; Rogers, 2003 in Bartholomew et al., 2011). Offering a petition and/or manifest is based on *advocacy* and *lobbying* in the form of the dialogue (Petty et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011). Environment focussed behaviour theories show that entering into a dialogue and argumentation is a method to achieve change (Christoffel, 2000; Galer-Unti et al., 2004; Kingdon, 2003; Wallack et al., 1993; Weible & Sabatier, 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011). GSAs can also take part in national actions as the popular Purple Friday whereby GSAs take action in order to have their fellow pupils and teachers wear purple as a statement against homo/bi/transphobia.

This is a combination of the *social action* (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2004, 2008; Rothman, 2004 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and *mobilizing social networks* (Heany & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) methods. GSAs can get to work by using GSA posters and their own campaign material showing that you can prefer men as well as women and that both options are OK. This method, aimed at changing the social norm, is the application of *entertainment-education* or *edutainment* (Bandura, 1997; Bouman et al., 1998; Moyer-Guse, 2008; Petraglia, 2007; Rogers, 2003; Wilkin et al., 2007 in Bartholomew et al., 2011): educational entertainment that suits the target group and is serious and light at the same time.

3. Activities for the support of LGBT pupils

Pupils in a GSA often are a support group for LGBT pupils. The GSA is a safe place for LGBT pupils for their coming out and to discuss sexual and gender diversity with others. In many cases, the GSA will arrange members who will support the LGBT pupils in the school. Most GSAs have an own email address, for example, where they can be contacted for questions. GSAs regularly have meetings where open discussions can be held about what the participants experience at school. Most GSAs have even implemented a buddy project for youth who wish to have their coming out at school. Theories on increasing social networks and social support refer to four ways of strengthening social support, whereby the development of new *network linkages* (Heany & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) is one, for example by way of a support group which offers emotional support. A second way is increase the social support by strengthening existing *network linkages* (Heaney & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and that can be realised by using *natural helpers* (Eng et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) individuals with an *opinion leader status* within the school who express a positive attitude about and provide support to LGBT pupils. By their presence the GSAs often enter into dialogue about sexual and gender diversity. They will address youth if 'homo' is used as a swear word and express themselves positively about LGBTs to other pupils in the school.

GSA councils

There are 2 GSA councils: the GSA Teacher council and the GSA Pupil council. Pupils and teachers take part in these councils who adopt an active role for the GSA at their school and offer help to other GSAs. The GSA councils can be contacted for support and advice to pupils and teachers who wish to set up a GSA or already have done so. They are ambassadors by actively expressing that if you want to do something at school to combat homo/bi/transphobia and transphobia, you can set up a GSA and they are also a sounding board group for COC. The GSA councils both meet 3 or 4 times per year. COC also attends these meetings. The GSA councils provide a direction to the support offered by COC by providing input on which support is necessary and to assess it. The GSA Teacher council is actively involved with the organisation of teacher discussions in the country. The GSA Pupil council is also actively involved with the promotional activities of the GSA, for example on social media.

4. Supporting GSAs

When GSAs have been set up, COC will try to support these GSAs in order to work as effectively as possible. COC conveys knowledge and makes sure that the supporting material is received by the GSAs, offers advice to the GSAs on what they can do and makes sure that the pupils can exchange knowledge and experience. COC has materials and supporters available for this purpose. This support can also be offered by social organisations.

1. Knowledge transfer

First of all, schools can use the COC education. They can also use the GSA lesson package that is in line with the COC education. The GSA lesson package consists of 4 modules of 25 minutes and offers complete information on sexual and gender diversity. This lesson package allows the pupils to investigate the position of LGBTs at their own school and to determine to what extent you can be yourself at school, femininity and masculinity, love, acceptance of LGBTs are discussed and pupils are invited to think of a GSA activity. The GSA package is a combination of active learning (Bandura, 1986) by the digital and interactive set up of the GSA lesson package and cooperative learning (Paluck & Green, 2006 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) in the group. Teachers can refer to the website homogeschiedenis.nl as a source of information when writing a paper.

2. Money and physical material

There is a GSA fund for GSAs whereby GSAs can receive minor financial contributions for activities. In addition, there is the GSA action package we described earlier. For national actions such as the GSA Week and Purple Friday, COC also has action packages available.

3. Advice

COC Netherlands has various GSA supporters. These employees provide support to pupils as well as teachers who wish to set up a GSA or have a GSA, provide advice and answer questions about various GSA-related matters. Via gaystraightalliance.nl, many *good practices* are shared which pupils and teachers can use. The majority of these example activities were developed together with pupils.

4. Exchanging knowledge and experience

Twice a year COC organises a national GSA day where GSAs meet (and possibly teachers and pupils who have not yet set up a GSA) to exchange knowledge and experiences. The days are always organised at different schools in collaboration with the local GSA. The program is set up together with them, whereby there always is a separate program for teachers and pupils, which later mixes. The map on www.gaystraightalliance.nl allows GSAs to meet each other to exchange knowledge and experiences.

2.4 Development history

Involvement target group

The intervention GSA is fully based on a bottom-up approach. This approach is completely different than the top-down approach focused on school management, which COC, the intervention owner, used to apply and is specifically aimed at the pupils at the school. This different approach is the direct result of earlier experiences of COC in educational projects; the former approach turned out to be very difficult, very expensive to change the schools by approaching the school management, and the result could also not be sufficiently sustained. The school management failed to see the problem and sometimes considered that homosexuality did not occur in their schools. Social acceptance, we have learned, cannot be organised top-down. Moreover, the less one knows about LGBT pupils and their issues at school, the less one cares about them. LGBT pupils and teachers should point out to their school environment that they too have a responsibility in guaranteeing a safe learning environment for LGBT pupils. That approach requires some guts to make sexual and gender diversity visible and a topic for discussion. GSA's approach is therefore to support the resilience of LGBTs, which leads to visibility of sexual and gender diversity within the school, makes a topic which can be discussed and contributes to social acceptance. COC has shifted its focus as intervention owner to putting the issue on the agenda and activating the target group to work on this themselves. The thought behind this is that the target group will achieve the most effective approach of the issues on the agenda.

Parallel to the development of the new approach of intervention owner COC the Jong&Out community started the online and offline meeting options of LGBTs between 12 and 18 years. Jong&Out essentially is the result of a request made by one homosexual boy, Danny Hoekzema, who was 14 years old at the time, who did not have any difficulty with resilience, but he did feel alone. He knew there had to be more LGBT youth of his age, but he was unable to find them. LGBT youth were not visible and there was no infrastructure for them to find each other. Together with Danny, COC Netherlands set up the Jong&Out community. There appeared to be a great demand for this infrastructure, as this community grew into a large group of LGBT youth in no time, with lots of initiatives and ideas, who took control of the community. COC facilitated and supported Jong&Out, but it was actually and initiative by and for youth. Within the Jong&Out community the youth supported each other in developing resilience and discussed the issues they experienced. They often ended up talking about school, and not only the issues they faced, but also about how they wanted to change this.

In 2008, COC Netherlands started to activate youth and teachers to set up Gay-Straight Alliances, based on an American concept. Further to the new approach, which COC refers to as the inside-out method, GSA focuses on the insiders in the community, the homosexuals, the lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders who face difficulties at their secondary school on a daily basis. The COC believes in the power that people have. The COC activates, supports and brings people together. The COC initiates and facilitates, but the people who have a direct interest in the emancipation process take charge of that process. They have an intrinsic motivation to be active, they are the engine behind the process. They are the experts too, as they have inside information on the issues, they have direct experience with the problems at hand, but also with the chances of improvement, they know the culture and the language and codes within which a long-term change can be achieved.

The GSAs are very explicitly autonomous. This autonomy is a necessary condition within the *inside-out* method. Activating means: giving responsibility. The insiders determine what the process must look like, they know their environment best and can determine what needs to be done at their school to ensure that the school climate becomes safer for LGBTs. COC Netherlands has the ambition to activate and stimulate the GSAs, but explicitly does not have the intention to manage the content of the GSAs. Each school and each group of initiators are free to determine the activities of the GSA as they see fit.

Foreign intervention

The GSA intervention was developed in the United States, where Gay-Straight Alliances have been operating since 1988 and people are very familiar with the Gay-Straight Alliance concept. More than 4000 GSAs are registered at GLSEN, the organisation supporting the GSA in the US. A GSA operates in a similar way as in the Netherlands. However, the school situation for American youth is different: schools similar with our secondary schools have a lot of school clubs. Pupils are encouraged to take part in groups that organise after-school activities and in some cases this is obligatory. There are educational clubs, such as the mathematics or science club, cultural clubs such as groups of Jewish or Asian pupils, sports clubs, theatre and art clubs, and also clubs that focus on a charity. This can involve the accrual of funds for charity or informing people about injustices or diseases. Gay-Straight Alliances are also included in these school groups. GSAs are, just as in the Netherlands, clubs that provide support to LGBTs within the school, create visibility and make sexual and gender diversity a topic to discuss and add to the knowledge on that subject. Just like in the Netherlands, GSAs set their own goals and are therefore different at each school. What they also have in common with the Dutch GSAs is that many GSAs take part in national campaigns of supporting organisation GLSEN.

Upon starting the input of the intervention, the framework in which the GSAs operate are assessed. For COC, the GSA is the perfect way to work according to the *inside-out method*, which is based on the principle that you support the persons directly affected in an environment in ensuring that sexual and gender diversity becomes more visible and is a topic to discuss. The assumption is that this will lead to more acceptance of LGBTs. The concept of a school club with LGBTs and non-LGBTs who together provide support and stand up for LGBTs has been directly adopted. However, an American GSA operates differently than a Dutch GSA. As setting up a school club is not something that is regularly done, COC Netherlands has emphasised the campaigning element, as well as taking action against homo/trans/biphobia. The method used by GLSEN has not been taken over. This has also not been referred to at the start of the intervention, although we can conclude after five years, that they have many similarities. The GSA intervention started as a pilot project. This provided the opportunity to determine the right methods as the project went along as well as the means to further develop the intervention together with the pupils activated for setting up a GSA.

In the US, manuals have been drawn up of over a 100 pages on how to set up a GSA. COC has reviewed these manuals and has decided to adopt a different approach. The Dutch GSA manuals don't provide a step-by-step plan explaining what the youth must do. After all, the goal is to activate youth to take action, and not to fully brief them on what to do. COC has met with youth to look into how a GSA comes about and how the Dutch model for a GSA could work. The example activities offered, the GSA step-by-step plan and large nationwide GSA actions have been developed together with GSA pupils over the years.

3. Substantiation

Causes

LGBT youth are faced with an unsafe school climate. They are often confronted with negative treatment, cannot be open about them being LGBT, don't have the opportunity to share their experiences and are not supported within the school environment. A lack of safety means that these youth feel that they are not or insufficiently protected against the danger or threat of danger caused by people in the public space of the school. Goodenow et al. (2006) and Nicholas et al. (2011) refer to the unsafe feeling that LGBTs have within the school is determined by the presence of *victimization* (verbal and physical bullying and violence) and the presence of social support.

Research has shown that various risk and protective factors can be established at individual and school level that reduce or increase the chances of an unsafe situation for LGBT pupils.

Risk factors

At *level of LGBT pupils* (1) the expectation that is you have your coming out as LGBT, the people around you could respond negatively is a risk factor. These pupils hide their LGBT identity and are not open because they are afraid of disappointment and rejection (van Bergen en van Lisdonk, 2010; Meyer, 2003). (2) Parents who do not accept that their child is LGBT are also a risk factor at individual level (Ryan et al., 2009). In addition to the expectation that others will respond negatively to your coming out, LGBT youth also have to deal with (3) internalised homo negativity (Meyer, 2003). Accepting yourself, that you are LGBT is a process (Felten & Boote, 2012) and not every LGBT pupil will achieve that self-acceptance (Lee, 2002). This can result in negative feelings about your own sexual preference and that of other LGBTs and a low self-respect (van Bergen en van Lisdonk, 2010). (4) Research shows that LGBT youth often don't know how to deal with negativity they are faced with, don't have any answer ready. Toomey et al. (2011) conclude that there is a lack of resilience. (5) Finally a risk factor at individual level is having few interpersonal relations within the school with other pupils (Lee, 2002; Mayberry, 2006; Toomey et al, 2011).

At *the level of non-LGBT pupils* not being familiar with LGBTs is a risk factor. Youth who have a negative attitude towards homosexuality indicate that they are not interested in getting to know gay or bisexual youth (6) and are not interested in hearing their personal stories (Keuzenkamp et. al., 2010). The absence of knowledge of sexual and gender diversity is also a risk factor. Research conducted by Buijs (2008) into the causes of anti-homosexual violence has shown that the perpetrators of anti-homosexual violence have incoherent ideas and little knowledge (7) of sexual and gender diversity.

One of the risk factors at *school level* that increases the chances of an unsafe environment for a LGBT pupil is (8) Attending a large school in an urban area as generally more bullying goes on at these schools and the feeling of safety is less (Anderman & Kimweli, 1997 in Goodenow et al., 2006) (9). In addition, experiencing negative responses for being LGBT has direct consequences on the feeling of safety experienced by LGBT, according to Kelleher (2009). These negative responses can be by way of stigmatisation, bullying, verbal and physical violence and excessive behaviour (Meyer, 2003; Kelleher, 2009; Toomey et al., 2011). LGBT-youth also (10) miss recognition and therefore often feel they are the only one. Van Bergen et al. (2013) feel this is due to the lack of visibility of LGBTs. When youth are open about being LGBT, there is no opportunity to (11) share experiences, because their environment often doesn't know how to respond (Felten & Boote, 2012). According to Lee (2002) this is due to a (12) lack of knowledge of the school management, teachers and pupils about sexual and gender diversity and the issues faced by LGBTs at school.

Protective factors

At the level of the LGBT pupil (1) having a social network within the school, contact with peers in order to exchange experiences and problems is a protective factor (Bool & Dijkstra, 2009). Having a network within the school increases the feeling of being connected to the school (Goodenow et al., 2006). (2) Having good social skills is essential to achieve this. (3) In addition to having a LGBT social network, it is important to have social support from youth in the same situation and to exchange experiences and feel recognition and recognised in order to fit in (Felten & Boote, 2012; Kuyper, 2011; Meyer, 2003). (4) Being open about your sexual preference is an essential prerequisite for this (Eisenberg en Resnick, 2006 & Haas et al, 2011), just as (5) the capacity to request support in your environment. After all, (6) resilience of LGBT pupils is the most important protection factor: LGBT youth who know how to deal with negative responses and know how to respond are more capable of dealing with the situation (Toomey et al., 2011).

At the level of non-LGBT pupils direct contact with LGBTs is a protective factor. According to Kuyper en Bakker (2006) there is a great chance that heterosexuals will adopt a more positive attitude toward homosexuals and bisexuality (7) if they have LGBs in their direct circle of family or friends. Sexual resilience of heterosexual youth is also a protection factor. Youth that are more sexually resilient are less fearful of being influenced or sexually approached by LGBs (Felten, 2008). Social psychologist Gordon Allport (1954) suggests in his contact theory that conflicts between various groups or people will decrease when they are in regular contact with each other. According to this reasoning (8) contact between LGBTs and non-LGBTs are a way to adjust the negative stereotypes. If non-LGBT pupils adopt a negative attitude in respect of LGBTs, this is mainly due to negative stereotypes. Pupils are, for example, irritated by gays because they would not behave masculine enough and by lesbians because they would not behave feminine enough (Dankmeijer & Schouten, 2013). Providing facts about over sexual and gender diversity can remove prejudices. The visibility (10) of LGBTs who don't tally with the stereotypes perceived as negative by pupils can also contribute to this (Mooij & Fettelaar 2012). However, Allport (1979) acknowledges that only personal contact with 'the unknown other' will suffice in order to reduce the prejudices. In order to combat negative stereotypes and to adjust prejudices, it is important for people to have an interpretative cognitive framework in which to receive new information. This shows the importance of providing (11) the right information on sexual and gender diversity in order to reduce homo/bi/transphobia (Lingiardi et al, 2005).

A protection factor at school level for the reduction the chances of unsafety for LGBT pupils that is often referred to is (12) receiving social support from the social environment (Goodenow et al., 2006). That social support can be emotional, instrumental, informative and encouraging and is given by pupils, teachers and school management who together form the *community* of the school (Bartholomew et al., 2011). School management and teachers who are aware of the presence and specific problems of LGBT pupils and express this awareness, reduce the chances of unsafe conditions according to Goodenow et al., 2006. Teachers who also (13) intervene in the event of bullying, who (14) openly discuss LGBT issues within and school and (15) include LGBT subjects in their lessons reduce the chances of unsafety (Greytak et al, 2013). (16) When those teachers express a positive attitude towards LGBTs, this has a positive influence (Szalacha, 2003; Greytak et al., 2013). More specifically (17) the intolerance of bullying and stigmatisation of LGBT pupils by other pupils is a protection factor (Szalacha, 2003; Toomey et al., 2011). (18) The school management can exert influence by including the LGBT-related subjects in the curriculum (Greytak et al., 2013). (19) A protection factor that follows on that is having discussions at school about sexual and gender diversity. A school culture where sexual and gender diversity is accepted is a protection factor (Goodenow et al, 2006). (20) Role models in the school environment are also a protection factor, as they make LGBTs visible and can serve as a positive example (Dewaele, 2006). (21) This is subject to the condition that the knowledge of teachers and school management of sexual and gender diversity is increased (Goodenow et al., 2006).

Factors to be dealt with

The intervention's ultimate goal: there is a positive norm/standard with regard to sexual and gender diversity (LGBT) which will make the school climate for LGBT pupils safer. Factors that can be influenced and that are addressed by the GSA intervention are:

At the level of LGBT pupils

- Having a social network within the school, LGBT or non-LGBT, which offers support (Bool & Dijkstra, 2009; Goodenow et al., 2006; Lee, 2002; Mayberry, 2006; Toomey et al., 2011) (1, 2, 7, 11).¹
- The resilience of LGBT pupils, so that they know how to deal with negative responses (Toomey et al., 2011) (4, 5, 6)).
- Being able to be open about being LGBT (van Bergen & van Lisdonk, 2010; Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006 in Haas et al., 2011; Kerkhof & van Luyn, 2010; Meyer, 2003) (3).
- Sharing experiences and connecting with LGBT pupils who are facing similar issues (Dewaele, 2006; Kuyper, 2011; Meyer, 2003) (2, 3, 6).

At the level of Non-LGBT pupils

- Being familiar with LGBTs (Keuzenkamp et al., 2010; Kuyper & Bakker, 2006) en contact between LGBTs and non-LGBTs (contact theory of Allport 1954) (9).
- However, Allport (1997) en Lingiardi et al., (2005) have shown that simply being familiar with LGBTs is not enough. It is therefore essential to have the right knowledge about sexual and gender diversity in order to combat homo/bi/transphobia and transphobia (8).
- Sexual resilience of heterosexual boys reduces their fear of being influenced or sexually approached by homosexuals or bisexuals. (Felten, 2008) (10).

At school level

- Conducting a dialogue about sexual and gender diversity in which LGBT pupils can share their experiences (Felten & Boote, 2012; Goodenow et al., 2006; Greytak et al., 2013; Lee, 2002) (12, 15).
- Not toleration verbal or physical bullying and violence on the basis of them being LGBT (Greytak et al., 2013; Kelleher, 2009; Meyer, 2003; Toomey et al., 2011) (13).
- Having a school culture in which LGBTs are accepted (Goodenow et al., 2006; van Bergen et al., 2013) (14, 15).
- Offering social support to LGBT pupils (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Goodenow et al., 2006; Szalacha, 2003) (1, 2, 16).

¹ The figures behind the factors that are addressed correspond with the sixteen sub goals formulated under 2.2.

Justification

1. Reaching and activating pupils and teachers & starting a GSA

Environment-oriented theories of collective behavioural change show that the individuals who form a community together are the designated forces for achieving changes in that community through a process of empowerment (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Zimmerman, 1990). This empowerment theory is reflected in the entire GSA approach, and starts immediately with the first three components as described under 2.3, namely (1) reaching pupils and teachers, (2) activating pupils and teachers to start a GSA, and (3) starting a GSA. These three components are a precondition for arriving at performing activities with which a GSA starts working on the subgoals as defined under 2.2.

2. Taking action in a GSA

When a GSA is started, its members will proceed to carry out activities with the collective final goal of a safer school climate for LGBT pupils. At the school level, we focus on having knowledge about sexual and gender diversity, not tolerating anti-LGBT expression, and intervening in inappropriate behaviour, making sexual and gender diversity visible, and providing social support for LGBTs. At the pupil level, we focus on expanding the own (LGBT) network at school, self-acceptance, and skills. Non-LGBTs are not brought into contact with LGBTs and learn more about sexual and gender diversity this way. We also ask them to actively support LGBTs.

Subgoals, approach, and methods cannot be considered as one. To address the negative treatment of LGBT youth, Meyer (2003) and Bartholomew et al. (2011) say you should focus on reducing stigmatisation (Link & Phelan, 2001). The cause of that stigmatization lies in the behaviour of the school management, teachers, and pupils who label, exclude, and discriminate (Mahajan et al., 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011). In addition to reducing the negative treatment of LGBT youth, we focus on social support of LGBTs in school. According to the environment-oriented behavioural theories, you specifically focus on improving social support here, and more specifically on mobilizing the social networks which form the basis of social support (Heaney & Israel, 2008; Eng et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011). You encourage these social networks in your approach for providing emotional support, positive feedback, and providing support in the form of information. For changing the social norm that it is totally okay for LGBTs to come out, mobilising social networks is equally important (Heaney & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011), in addition to *modelling* by means of communication expressions (Bandura, 1997). The relationship between the methods used above, the subgoals, and the approach are made clear in table 3.1 (on the next page).

3. Possible unwanted (side) effects

Since we know that approximately three-quarters of LGBT youth are confronted with bullying and other homophobic expressions (Keuzenkamp et al., 2010) and we also know that the topic of sexual and gender diversity is not always visible in schools, one can argue that it may also become less safe for LGBT young people if the topic is discussed. Attention to sexual and gender diversity in schools can also make any existing problems in school visible. If LGBT pupils feel too unsafe to come out, the problem of insecurity within this group will not become visible to teachers or the school management. Visibility of LGBT pupils in school can also cause visibility of the problems of this group. This may also give the impression that this perceived insecurity is related to the attention to sexual and gender diversity in school. However, in the experience of COC, GSAs often make the problems of LGBT visible to teachers and the school management. The recent study '*Anders in de klas*' (Buckx et al., 2014), an evaluation of activities performed by schools in the context of changing the core objectives in primary and secondary education to make attention to sexual and gender diversity obligatory for schools, shows that attention to sexual and gender diversity did not have an adverse effect. In primary education, attention to sexual and gender diversity led to more social acceptance from non-LGBT pupils, and in secondary education, it led to a greater sense of security under LGBT pupils. No adverse effects were measured.

table 3.1 Relationship between approach, method, and subgoals

APPROACH	METHOD	SUBGOALS
GSA can join the national campaign Purple Friday, in which fellow pupils, teachers, and the school management are asked to wear purple clothing to show their support for LGBTs and that they should not be bullied for their sexual orientation or gender identity	A combination of <i>social action</i> (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2004, 2008; Rothman, 2004 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and <i>mobilizing social networks</i> (Heany & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011)	LGBT pupils: 1, 2, 3, 4 Non-LGBT pupils: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 School/school management/teachers: 13, 14, 15
To counter bullying and violence against LGBTs, GSAs can offer a petition to fellow pupils in which they declare that they will not scold or tease and that they are passive members of the GSA. Toward the school management, GSAs can offer a manifesto in which the school management speaks out against LGBT discrimination and receives tips on how to include this in their school policy	A combination of <i>agenda setting</i> (Cobb & Elder, 1983; Sabatier, 2003; Weible, 2008; Weible et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and <i>advocacy and lobbying</i> (Christoffel, 2000; Galer-Unti et al., 2004; Kingdon, 2003; Wallack et al., 1993; Weible & Sabatier, 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011)	LGBT pupils: 3, 4, 5 Non-LGBT pupils: 7, 10, 11 School/school management/teachers: 12, 13
GSAs can ask COC educators, who talk about their own experiences	A combination of <i>empathy training</i> (Batson et al., 2002 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and <i>interpersonal contact</i> (Pettigrow & Tropp, 2006 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) in the form of personal stories of persons in the class who belong to the stigmatised group	LGBT pupils: 3, 4, 5 Non-LGBT pupils: 8, 10 School/school management/teachers: 12
Teachers can work with the GSA curriculum in class, which is partly digital and revolves around sexual identity and gender identity. For information for creating assignments, they can refer to the website homogeschiedenis.nl	A combination of active learning (Bandura, 1986) through the digital and interactive design of the GSA curriculum and cooperative learning (Paluck & Green, 2006 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) in the group	LGBT pupils: 3 Non-LGBT pupils: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 School/school management/teachers: 12, 13, 15
GSA will enter into a dialogue with pupils who bully LGBTs and can learn, by means of videos, how other GSAs speak out against LGBT discrimination at Staoptegenhomofobie.nl	A combination of <i>modelling</i> (Bandura, 1997; McAlister et al., 2008; Rogers, 2003 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and <i>feedback</i> (Kazdin, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011)	LGBT pupils: 3, 5 Non-LGBT pupils: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 School/school management/teachers: 12
GSA can offer support in the form of a <i>support group</i> to LGBT pupils who are struggling with their <i>coming out</i> and assist them with questions about sexual and gender identity	Theories about social networks and social support list four ways of strengthening social support, one of which is <i>network linkages</i> (Heany & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011), e.g. in the form of a mentoring programme or self-help group in which emotional support is provided	LGBT pupils: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 Non-LGBT pupils: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 School/school management/teachers: 16

<p>In their action package, GSAs receive fact sheets with tips for the school management, confidential counsellors, and teachers. School management will receive tips about LGBT-friendly school environment, confidential counsellors will receive tips about how to deal with LGBT pupils, and teachers will receive tips about how to integrate sexual and gender diversity in classes</p>	<p>A second way of increasing social support is by strengthening <i>network linkages</i> (Heaney & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) which can be done by deploying <i>natural helpers</i> (Eng et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011): individuals with <i>opinion leader status</i> within the school who speak positively of and offer support to LGBT pupils. A form of mobilizing the social network to encourage the provision of support (Heaney & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011)</p>	<p>LGBT pupils: 1, 2, 3, 4 Non-LGBT pupils: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 School/school management/teachers: 12, 15, 16</p>
<p>With the GSA posters and its own campaign material, GSA shows that you can fancy both men and women and that this is totally okay</p>	<p>A method for changing social norms is to apply <i>entertainment-education</i> or <i>edutainment</i> (Bandura, 1997; Bouman et al., 1998; Moyer-Guse, 2008; Petraglia, 2007; Rogers, 2003; Wilkin et al., 2007 in Bartholomew et al., 2011): educative entertainment that fits the target group and is both serious and playful at the same time</p>	<p>LGBT pupils: 3 Non-LGBT pupils: 8 School/school management/teachers: 13</p>
<p>GSA will enter into a dialogue with pupils, teachers, and school managements about sexual and gender diversity, including in the form of information by GSA members</p>	<p>Environment-oriented <i>advocacy</i> and <i>lobbying</i> in the form of engaging in a dialogue (Petty et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and providing arguments is a method for inciting change (Christoffel, 2000; Galer-Unti et al., 2004; Kingdon, 2003; Wallack et al., 1993; Weible & Sabatier, 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011)</p>	<p>LGBT pupils: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 Non-LGBT pupils: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 School/school management/teachers: 16</p>
<p>GSA provides classroom education about sexual and gender diversity and <i>coming out</i> from own experiences; LGBT pupils can directly and indirectly share their experiences here.</p>	<p>Combination of <i>modelling</i> (Bandura, 1997; McAlister et al., 2008; Rogers, 2003 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) and deploying <i>natural helpers</i> (Eng et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011), strengthen existing <i>network linkages</i> (Heaney & Israel, 2008 in Bartholomew et al., 2011) which is best achieved by deploying <i>natural helpers</i> (Eng et al., 2009 in Bartholomew et al., 2011): members of the target group who are ahead and serve as a source of information, support, and as a role model in the form of <i>modelling</i> (Bandura, 1997; McAlister et al., 2008; Rogers, 2003 in Bartholomew et al., 2011)</p>	<p>LGBT pupils: 3, 4, 5 Non-LGBT pupils: 8, 10 School/school management/teachers: 12</p>

Effective elements

- The final target group of the GSA intervention are LGBT pupils, but all other groups within the school (school management, teachers, and pupils) are involved as an intermediary target group and actively approached to join and together, make the school environment safer for LGBT pupils. In other words, mobilizing social networks, also by combining LGBT and non-LGBT pupils in one alliance (2, 3, 5, 6)
- The purpose of the GSA intervention is to explicitly have students (supported by teachers) take responsibility for help achieve a safer school environment. In other words, a change that is bottom-up and inside-out. The material COC Netherlands makes available provides a framework, but GSAs are fully autonomous and pupils are in charge: they decide what objectives and matching activities are appropriate for their school (2, 3, 5)
- In addition to pupils, teachers are also actively approached via communication and teacher discussions throughout the country, because they can make an important contribution by supporting the GSA and speaking positively about sexual and gender diversity, or by introducing the GSA curriculum in the classroom (2, 3, 5, 6)
- The material COC Netherlands makes available to the GSAs for free is focused on the target group, makes extensive use of *modelling*, is playful yet direct, and is mostly compiled in cooperation with young people. Many good practices and tips are shared, both in videos and in text, which are provided by young people themselves. The GSA material is highly rated by users (2, 3, 5)
- In reaching and activating LGBT and non-LGBT pupils, promotional videos, photo strips, and stories make clear that there is a problem (LGBT pupils feel unsafe at school), whereby it is also made clear how you yourself can easily do something about it. Through focused deployment of *modelling* on the target group, pupils become acquainted with the GSA and see how easy it is to start one yourself (2, 3, 5)
- Pupils and teachers engage in a dialogue with their surroundings and show that they are against bullying of LGBT students. They make a stand for their peers. (2, 3, 5, 6)

Score meanings:

2 = Assumption in approach

3 = Substantiation

5 = Practical experience

6 = Effects study

4. Execution

Materials

In order to activate, inform, and support pupils and teachers, three websites are available. First, there is the GSA website www.gaystraightalliance.nl. This website contains videos that demonstrate the necessity of a GSA and explain how you can start a GSA, has links to our various social media channels, tips and good practices for pupils and teachers to read, and allows them to sign up and connect to other GSAs, and request the free action package. In addition to this site, we also use our campaign site www.staoptegenhomofobie.nl, where pupils post videos with statements against homo/bi/transphobia, and the website www.homogeschiedenis.nl which offers information for pupils to write essays about sexual and gender diversity and provides teachers for information to use during their classes.

Pupils and teacher can order a GSA action package for free at COC Netherlands. This action package contains:

- an accompanying letter
- the GSA manifesto
- the GSA petition
- fact sheets for school management, confidential counsellors, and teachers
- the GSA pupil's guide
- the GSA teacher's guide
- the GSA school management brochure
- 5 different GSA posters
- GSA stickers
- materials from other parties and projects, such as flyers from iedereenisanders.nl and jongenout.nl
- a flyer with information about the GSA curriculum

In addition to these materials, the free GSA curriculum is available. This digital curriculum was developed in collaboration with Codename Future. In addition to our own channels, they also distribute the curriculum. The curriculum is designed specifically for the lower secondary education, because the compulsory education about sexual and gender identity of 2012 also only applies to lower secondary education.

Besides the default action package, COC Netherlands also offers materials for the annual Purple Friday. During Purple Friday, the great annual action by the GSA Network, GSAs ask their peers to wear purple in opposition of homo/bi/transphobia. COC supports Purple Friday with materials and a campaign revolving around this day. Pupils can request the campaign material from us free of charge, which consists of:

- purple wristbands
- posters
- GSA stickers
- a smaller GSA action package with 1 GSA pupil's guide, 1 GSA teacher's guide, and 1 school management brochure
- an accompanying letter explaining Purple Friday
- a list of tips and advice on how to organise a Purple Friday at your school

Since 2013, COC Netherlands has also been offering materials for a second national action: International Day of Silence. During this action, in which GSAs from the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand participate, pupils remain silent for one day to reflect on the consequences of bullying. This way, pupils draw attention to the effects of bullying and show their support for pupils who cannot stand up for themselves as well as others. GSAs can also request campaign materials for this action free of charge. These materials consist of:

- 'talking cards' (cards which describe why a participant is silent)
- a roll of International Day of Silence tape (pupil can use this to cover their mouths as a statement, and it can also be used for making posters; pupils receive instructions on how to make posters themselves and how to use the tape)
- stickers
- a smaller GSA action package with 1 GSA pupil's guide, 1 GSA teacher's guide, and 1 school management brochure
- an accompanying letter explaining the International Day of Silence

- letters for the school management and teachers with explanations of the action
- a list of tips and advice on how to organise an International Day of Silence at your school

In addition to the materials used for pupils, a brochure about the *inside out method* also appeared in English in 2013. This brochure is a flow chart which explains the methodology and provides information about COC's educational programme from Jong&Out to the Gay-Straight Alliances in schools. The brochure is internationally used and distributed at conferences and meetings where COC's education team or COC's international staff are present.

Type of organisation

The GSAs are active in secondary schools in the Netherlands. The activation and support of GSAs is done by COC and social organisations. GSAs exist throughout the entire country and in all types of schools. GSAs sometimes even exist outside secondary education, such as in vocational and college programmes. Especially the GSA action Purple Friday is held at many vocational programmes in the Netherlands.

It is difficult to ascertain how many GSAs there really are in the Netherlands. In the first five years of the intervention, COC has send a GSA action package to 505 (Ricardo, 2013) of the 680 secondary schools in the Netherlands (which they requested themselves). This does not automatically result in the start of a GSA. In 2013, there were 127 GSAs (Ricardo, 2013) registered on the website. It is difficult to estimate the actual number of GSAs, as they are not required to register as a GSA on the website. Therefore, the number of GSAs is somewhere between 127 and 505. GSAs mostly exist in peripheral urban areas (Van der Velden, 2011), and the province of Limburg has a relatively high number of GSAs. This has to do with the support which COC Limburg provides to these GSAs: COC Limburg has fully integrated the GSA approach into its educational programme.

Purple Friday is the GSA action with the greatest reach. During the first Purple Friday in 2010, pupils and teachers of 150 schools ordered a special Purple Friday action package, while only 100 were available. in 2011, there were 340 requests, and only 300 available. In 2012, 450 packages were available, but pupils and teachers of 607 requested one.

Education and skills

No specific education, training, or skills are required of executors. All pupils can start working with GSA. The material is simple enough for vmbo pupils and offers sufficient possibilities for vwo pupils. All teachers within the mentioned educational institutions can guide the pupils from the GSAs. In some cases, this can be a confidential counsellor, a scheduler, or even the janitor.

Pupils and teacher scan receive advice and guidance from the COC and/or local social organisations, and there are national GSA days twice per year during which experiences can be shared. There are no educational requirements for this. It is important, however, that the executors have specific skills. They must be able to deal with young people well and allow them to mostly steer the process. In addition, COC would rather see youth workers work with the GSA than policymakers; executors should not steer the process, as GSAs steer themselves. Executors must be able to take on the role of supporter, activator, and facilitator.

Quality Assurance

Monitoring and evaluation

COC monitors and evaluates the GSA approach in the following ways:

1. Continuous survey of applicants for GSA action package (12 x per year)
2. Evaluation by means of digital survey for annual action: Purple Friday
3. Evaluation by means of digital survey for annual action: International Day Of Silence
4. Three thematic focus group meetings per year

5. Evaluation of activities with GSA Pupil's Council
6. Evaluation of activities with GSA Teacher's Council
7. Annual reporting

The questionnaires to applicants for regular GSA packages (1) and the action packages for Purple Friday (2) and International Day of Silence (3), pertain to the usefulness of the material, the information needs of the user, what the user eventually did with the material, how the user arrived at ordering the package, and where the user first heard about the GSA and the action package. In addition to the structural evaluation of action packages and national actions by means of surveys, a focus group meeting is held three times per year (4). These meetings will only have a thematic approach which depends on the topics that are relevant at the time. For example, they may be about strengthening the approach in vmbo schools (focus group with vmbo pupils) or a group which addresses the specific needs of transgender pupils. Apart from the focus meetings, the COC also holds structural meetings with pupils in the GSA Pupil's Council (5) and teachers in the GSA Teacher's Council (6). The GSA councils are also a source of feedback. Both will meet in the presence of the COC three or four times per year. With the contribution of LGBT pupils and teachers, the COC will know what support actions are effective according to them. The COC will report on the GSA approach annually (7).

Continuous contact with the target group

In addition to the structured monitoring approach, COC maintains close contact with both teachers and LGBT pupils who are active within a GSA. Feedback will also occur during structured moments such as the teacher discussions (10 per year), GSA days (2 x per year), brainstorming sessions such as with the development of the GSA curriculum, and packing days for GSA action packages (4 per year on average). COC also has a lot of contact with the teachers and LGBT pupils it seeks to answer media requests. Much of the contact is through our Facebook page, where COC regularly provides input and advice to its followers. COC also maintains contact with the target group via Jong&Out, which is coordinated by COC Netherlands. The distance between COC and the target group is very small. The project is driven by means of discussions with the target group. Matters such as what actions we organise and what the contents of new material should be all come up in the contact with the target group. In the future, COC intends to develop an evaluation tool for GSAs COC will try to ensure that evaluations of activities are fed back to COC Netherlands.

Preconditions

1. Pupil initiative

The initiative for a GSA may arise both with a pupil and a teacher. A GSA is ultimately a group of pupils which stimulates the discussion about sexual and gender diversity in their own environment, in which one or more teachers act as activators, guides, supporters, and facilitators. Therefore, the process the GSA focuses on is led by pupils themselves. A GSA cannot be organised top-down. A school management cannot start a GSA or GSA action. Entering into a dialogue with each other is *peer-to-peer*.

2. Support

It is important that a GSA has support from and is assisted by the school management. In principle, any young person should be allowed to establish a GSA in a school, as it is not a formal institution. You could be a club which offers support to LGBTs and talks to its environment about bullying and discrimination. Support from the school can mean that actions can be organised at school, that posters can be put up, that information sessions can be provided, etc.

3. Teacher participation in a GSA

In itself, this is not a requirement for launching a GSA, but it increases the effectiveness of a GSA. Teachers support pupils within the school. This support is much more direct than the support of social organisations. Teachers can also ensure that GSAs persist within schools. Once the active pupils graduate, teachers can start looking for other active pupils within the school who want to lead the GSA.

4. Minimum activities

If the GSA is supported by pupils (with the assistance of teachers and support from the school management), activities can be performed. The GSA is emphatically a framework in which pupils (and teachers) themselves work in the goals important to them. COC offers examples and support for activities in the context of (1) information, in the context of (2) making sexual and gender diversity visible and discussable, and activities in the context of (3) support for other LGBTs. GSAs can focus on all of these goals, or on some of them, e.g. by focusing only on support for LGBTs in the school. The GSA method assumes that pupils determine their own goals and, as experts of their own environment, determine what is needed to achieve those goals. It is impossible to say how much is needed to achieve this effect, as it depends entirely on the goals that pupils (and teacher) choose themselves. COC speaks of a GSA if it is a pupil initiative that is supported by at least 1 teacher, has support from the school management, and conducts at least 1 GSA activity.

Costs

A GSA functions autonomously and stakeholders decide what they want to focus on. A GSA which sets up a musical in a year or organises a large event on Purple Friday will have different costs than a GSA which is more focused on supporting other LGBT pupils or a GSA which provides information sessions to all classes to raise awareness. Every GSA has different needs.

As long as COC has subsidies to provide support, material will be available for GSAs. GSAs will receive all the aforementioned materials from COC Netherlands for free. For this reason, it does not have to cost a school anything to set up a GSA. We do want to recommend that schools provide teachers with hours to work with the GSA. There are examples of schools which have done this. From experience, we know that on average, teachers spend about three hours per week on working with the GSA. If we assume that teachers work 40 weeks per year, this adds up to 120 hours per year for supporting a GSA. Of course, not only teachers, but other school employees are suitable for supporting a GSA as well. For example, the support tasks of a GSA could well fall under the function of a care coordinator. GSA support could also be included in the tasks of care coordinators.

5. Research into practical experiences

1. Process evaluation of practical experiences with the GSA intervention

- A. Ricardo, M.L. (2013). Internal, unpublished research
- B. This study is a process evaluation of the current version of the intervention Gay Straight Alliance (GSA). The process evaluation consisted firstly of studying (1) the range of the target group by analysing data relating to ordered products and secondly of studying (2) the practical applicability of the intervention, (3) the success and failure factors of the intervention, and (4) the assessment of activities and materials by interviewing users via a digital survey and a group interview. The target group were secondary education pupils who are active or have been active in a GSA.

During the study, one group interview took place with six young people representative of the target group. The experiences expressed during the interview have been collected by using a flipchart, post-its, and a log. The digital survey was completed by 119 young people. The survey was deployed via e-mail (a selection of 100 addresses) and via Facebook. The survey was interactive, which means some questions were visible or invisible depending on the answer to the preceding question. In addition, 45 respondents prematurely aborted the survey. All surveys were included in the study. Nearly all aborted surveys were aborted halfway through, which means a large part of the answers were still usable.

- C. The target group of the intervention – secondary school pupils – is reached by the intervention quite well. New GSAs often come into existence after a group has participated in Purple Friday or has indirectly, via the GSA network or a different LGBT youth network, been informed about the existence of GSAs. This leads to a lot of LGBTs coming into contact with the existence of GSAs, but less so for non-LGBT youth. In total, with the Purple Friday action packages and GSA action packages, 505 unique secondary schools (there are 680 secondary schools in the Netherlands) were reached.

Young people have identified various success and failure factors. As success factors, they identify: 1) the simplicity of starting a GSA, 2) the available promotional and informational material, 3) the good support in setting up a Purple Friday action, 4) the communication between COC Netherlands and GSA members via Facebook, and 5) that young people are in charge of what happened in the GSA. As failure factors and points of attention, they identified: 1) few concrete examples of actions, 2) no exchange of tips for actions between existing GSAs, and 3) that GSA is not yet nationally known by everyone, which results in a continuous need for explanation.

The following recommendations are made: 1) pay more attention to young people who are not directly in contact with existing LGBT youth networks, 2) think with LGBT youth about the development of action material that can be easily downloaded and printed, 3) think about the implementation of a ‘GSA board’ which pupils can start in their schools themselves and which can serve as a fixed core during a ‘GSA board year,’ and 4) do more research into the relationship between the intervention and the sense of security of LGBT youth in secondary schools.

COC Netherlands has indicated that it will implement the recommendations by 1) doing more campaign work outside its own networks, 2) making easy to print action material available, 3) deploy the GSA Council, which has been active since August 2013, to ‘bind’ pupils to the GSA. The GSA Council is a new component of the intervention that was added recently. And 4), COC has the intention of conducting a study or having a study conducted of the effectiveness of the intervention.

2. Qualitative research into the impact of GSA on its participants and their environment

- A. Van der Velden, C. (2011), research published by *NJR het Bureau*.
- B. This study is a qualitative study of the impact of the GSA on its participants and their environment.

The data for his research was collected in 2011 by means of a short literature study, focus groups, and the reflection of the researchers. Five focus groups were held with 3 – 6 participants (n=22). The participants were between 12 and 18 years and all sexual orientations and gender identities were represented (LGBT and heterosexual/cisgender).

- C. GSAs mainly impact participants. These young people experience a lot of support, gain more confidence, and more easily come out with their sexual orientation. The actions of the GSAs put the topic of homosexuality on the agenda. GSAs can positively influence the security perception of LGBT participants. Whether other pupils also feel safer at school has not been studied.

The perceived effectiveness of GSAs is very dependent on the involvement and continuity of members. GSAs are very valuable as support groups for LGBTs. Young people experience that the presence of a GSA creates a gay-friendly school climate. This promotes the coming-out of LGBT youth.

In addition, GSA participants say they develop many skills. This leads to ‘empowerment’ and has a positive impact on relationships with peers and teachers.

GSA actions are mainly focused on visibility, information, and making statements. The influence of GSAs on gay tolerance depends on the functioning of GSAs. New GSAs experience many negative reactions, while GSAs which have existed for a longer period and have done more tend to achieve more tolerance.

Involvement in a GSA results in a strong identification of the participants with the school.

The respondents were mostly active in GSAs in peripheral urban areas, and usually in havo/vwo schools with a relatively liberal/progressive school climate.

The following recommendations are made and have been adopted by COC Netherlands: 1) supporting GSAs in setting up actions (COC provides materials and advice for actions), 2) focus more on education and guest lectures (COC has developed a curriculum, successfully lobbied to have education on sexual and gender diversity included in the core objectives of education, and has a project to improve information officers), 3) provide GSAs with more tools to make sexual and gender diversity discussable (COC is providing more and more good practices), 4) supporting peer-to-peer coaching (this comes up in workshops during the GSA day), 5) creating attractive communication materials (COC has had a lot of new action material made), 6) stimulating unconventional actions (COC stimulates unconventional actions), 7) offering small grants for actions, 8) ensuring more mutual knowledge sharing between GSAs (COC facilitates knowledge sharing during GSA days and on the website), 9) stimulating vmbo schools and schools in rural areas to establish a GSA (here, COC mainly focuses on teachers who can support vmbo pupils in this process), 10) ensure that GSAs enter into a partnership with teachers (COC focuses on teacher involvement in GSAs), 11) ensuring that there are role models within schools who support the GSA (COC stimulates the visibility of GSA pupils in schools), 12) providing information on cooperation and structure & organisation (COC offers pupils possibilities for this during GSA days, on the website, and in manuals/guides), 13) providing advice about recruiting a diverse group of members (COC provides advice on this).

3. Qualitative research into motives, characteristics, and obstacles of GSA participation

- A. Enzerink, S. (2013) Master’s Thesis Educational Science UvA 2012 - 2013
- B. This study is a qualitative study of the motives, characteristics, and obstacles of LGBT students and their supporters in participating in Gay-Straight Alliances in secondary schools. The selection process leading to GSA participation was central.

The data for this study was collected in 2013 through interviews with pupils (n=32) from seven different secondary schools in five different provinces. With 10 pupils, individual interviews were held. The other 22 pupils participated in group interviews. The participants were between 13 and 19 years old. The participants of the individual interviews were very diverse, all sexual orientations were represented, both cisgender and transgender, and they were diverse in education levels (vmbo, havo, and vwo). They were all active within the GSA. The participants in the group interviews

were all have pupils. They participated in a GSA project week and were in the process of choosing whether to continue with the GSA after the GSA project week.

- C. The study indicates a number of motives, characteristics, and obstacles related to becoming active in a GSA and ways to take this path. These can be considered factors which play a role in the choice process with respect to GSA participation. Pupils who participate in a GSA distinguish themselves from their peers with a number of characteristics. Personal characteristics that can contribute to motives for GSA participation are within the realm of: experiencing a problem; being LGBT; knowing an LGBT person; personality; upbringing. Of these characteristics, especially ‘experiencing a problem’ directly leads to motives for participation in a GSA. Pupils have other motives for GSA participation: helping others; putting an end to bullying, name calling, and homo/bi/transphobia; being a source of support for LGBT pupils. Motivated pupils experience obstacles they need to overcome before actually proceeding to participate in a GSA. Important obstacles may be: no knowledge about the GSA; being afraid of the consequences; doubting their own capacity. These obstacles can be overcome by pupils due to by seeking out support, help, and information of by receiving these from teachers or the GSA. At that moment, there is, respectively: knowledge about the GSA, being ready to deal with any consequences; confidence.

Despite mixed results from information sessions by LGBT persons (Athanasas & Larrabee, 2003; Kwon & Hugelshofer, 2012; Mooij et al., 2012; Rye et al., 2007; Span, 2011; Walch et al., 2012), the current study indicates that GSA participation can indeed have a positive effect. What may play a part here is that the information officers are fellow pupils rather than adult, external educators. It is conceivable that this way, pupils more easily become aware of the problem that is happening in their own environment, what appeared to be an important factor, and that they may have a different kind of sympathy for fellow pupils than for adults they will likely never meet again. From this viewpoint, contact and education by LGBT persons may not only play a part in Knowledge about the GSA, but also in Experiencing a problem and Knowing an LGBT person, considering that some GSA members identify as LGBT.

In addition, this study pointed out that teachers can contribute to pupils being less afraid of consequences. For instance, this study confirms findings from a previous study which indicated that teachers can have a positive effect on pupils by exuding an open attitude toward sexual and gender diversity (Adelman & Woods, 2006; Wernick et al., 2012), partly because this encourages them to join the GSA sooner (Kosciw et al., 2012).

Finally, the study shows that *empowerment* leads to *more empowerment*. Enzerink indicates that *empowerment* is primarily a result of GSA participation (Russell et al., 2010; Van der Velden, 2011). The current study shows that *empowerment* also plays a role in the choice process which precedes GSA participation.

6. Research into the effectiveness

GSAs in the Netherlands are very similar to GSAs in the US. The intervention in the Netherlands works in a similar manner to that in the United States, as can be read in section 2.4. What differs is the school situations of American and Dutch youth: in schools that are similar to our secondary schools, many school clubs are set up. Because setting up a school club is not common in the Netherlands, and because the GSA is a relatively new concept, the Dutch approach focuses more on the campaign to reach pupils and teachers and activating them to start a GSA. Activating pupils and teachers is more difficult in the Netherlands, but once a GSA has ‘come alive’, the activities of American and Dutch GSAs are very similar, and the support offered by American organisations is very similar to the support that is currently offered in the Netherlands. The studies described below provide an indication of the effectiveness of GSAs in the Netherlands.

1. Safety of sexual minority adolescents

- A. Goodenow, C., Szalacha, L., Westheimer, K. (2006).
- B. This study uses data from the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000), along with data at the school level, to compare the safety of LGBT pupils in 52 schools, selected based on a stratified random sample, with and without LGBT pupil support groups. In total, 3,637 young people participated in the survey, of which 202 belonged to a *sexual minority*. The 202 LGBT pupils attended a school with a *support group* 53.9% of the time, and for non-LGBT pupils, that percentage was 54.5%.
- C. *Survey results:*
The presence of a GSA or a *support group* has a significant effect on the sense of safety of LGBT pupils, even after adjustment for demographic characteristics of the pupil and characteristics of the school, according to Goodenow et al. (2006). LGBT pupils in schools with GSAs or *support groups* have approximately half the risk of *dating violence*, being threatened and wounded at school, or skipping school because they are afraid (OR = 0.48, 0.47 and 0.43 respectively) compared to LGBT pupils in schools without *support groups*. In addition, these LGBT pupils run a third less risk of attempting suicide (OR = 0.29). Besides the *support groups*, *school staff members* are of significant importance as well: LGBT pupils who feel like they can talk to school staff about problems are one-third less likely to be threatened or wounded at school (OR = 0.36) or to attempt suicide (OR = 0.34) than LGBT pupils who do not feel like they can talk to school staff about their problems.

2. GSA in relation to school performance and mental well-being *LGBT Youth*

- A. Heck, N. C., Flentje, A., Cochran, B. N. (2011).
- B. A survey was conducted among 145 LGBT young people between 18 and 20 years old, recruited through LGBT initiatives at *colleges* and universities, which studied whether attending a *high school* with a GSA can be associated with more positive school experience and better mental well-being. Heck et al. (2011) combine the results of this survey with a literature study.
- C. *Survey results:*
LGBT young people who attended a *high school* with GSA (GSA+), score significantly higher in the *school belonging* factor than LGBT young people who attended a *high school* without GSA (GSA-). Heck et al. (2011) illustrate this with an average score of 20.92 for GSA+ compared to an average of 17.98 for GSA-, with $p=0.003$. In addition, Heck et al. (2011) looked at alcohol use by the respondents, with a resulting average score of 3.94 for GSA+ respondents and an average of 6.72 for GSA- respondents, with $p<0.001$. Finally, GSA+ respondents show significantly more positive results when it comes to depression and sadness: GSA+ scores an average of 10.79 compared to an

average of 15.18 for GSA respondents, with $p=0.030$.

Literature study results:

The presence of GSAs in schools can contribute to a safer environment for LGBT young people by showing that *hate speech* and *victimization* will not be tolerated (GLSE, 2007). This is confirmed by Szalacha (2003): pupils who attended a *high school* with a GSA were confronted with fewer homophobic remarks in school than pupils who attended a school without a GSA. Lee (2002) conducted interviews with seven pupils who indicated they felt safer and were harassed less often because they participated in a GSA. This is supported by research that is related to visiting schools with GSAs (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Walls, et al., 2010). Schools with a GSA are places where LGBT young people feel supported (GLSEN, 2007). LGBT pupils who attend a school with a GSA are less likely to skip school due to feeling unsafe compared to LGBT pupils in schools without a GSA (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Walls, et al., 2010).

3. GSA in relation to *Young Adult Well-Being*

- A. Toomey, R.B., Ryan, C., Diaz, R.M., Russel, S.T. (2011).
- B. This study is based on a survey of 245 LGBT young people between 21 and 25 years old, with the primary research question: to what extent is there a connection between attending a *high school* with GSA and psychosocial well-being in *young adulthood*. The respondents were recruited in 2005 on locations frequented by young LGBTs in the San Francisco Bay Area. 86 of the 245 respondents (35.10%) attended a *high school* with GSA, with 55 (63.95%) of them indicating that they participated in that GSA in some way or another.
- C. The presence of a GSA during high school is significantly associated with the psychosocial well-being and the level of education of respondents: the presence of a GSA has a negative correlation (-3.24 with $p<0.05$) with depression and a positive correlation (0.12 with $p<0.01$) with confidence. In addition, a significantly positive correlation was found between the presence of a GSA and the level of education: a correlation of 2.15 with $p<0.05$. Toomey et al. (2011) also looked at the effects of participation in a GSA, but concluded in addition to previous research (e.g. Walls et al., 2010) that the presence of a GSA within the school is a better predictor of well-being of LGBT pupils than participation in that GSA.

4. The benefits of *LGBT-related School Resources* for transgender youth

- A. Greytak, E.A., Kosciw, J.G., Boesen, M.J. (2013).
- B. In this quantitative study, with a survey as research method, LGBT-related material, policies, and activities (such as GSAs) for schools were studied for their effectiveness and availability to transgender youth (n=409), compared to cisgender youth (n=6,444). The data used was from an earlier study from 2010 of school experienced of LGBT youth (Kosciw et al., 2010). For that survey, recruitment was done via community organisations that work with LGBT youth, LGBT mailings, on LGBT websites, and via two social media websites, namely Myspace and Facebook. The participants were between 13 and 21 years old and from all US states.
- D. 216 of the 409 transgender youth (52.9%) indicated to have (had) a GSA at school, compared to 44% of the cisgender youth (2,835). Greytak et al. (2013) conclude from their research that GSAs show the best outcomes for LGBT youth and can be more meaningful for these young people than an LGBT-inclusive curriculum, supporting teachers, and an anti-bullying policy. Negative correlations were found between the presence of a GSA and victimisation based on sexual orientation: -0.172 with $p<0.01$ for transgender youth and -0.133 with $p<0.01$ for cisgender LGBT pupils. For the relationship between the presence of a GSA and victimisation based on gender identity, positive results, and therefore, negative correlations were found as well: -0.196 with $p<0.01$ for transgender youth and -0.107 with $p<0.01$ for cisgender LGBT pupils. A negative correlation was also found between the presence of a GSA and absenteeism rates: -221 with $p<0.01$ for transgender youth and -0.085 with $p<0.01$ for cisgender LGBT pupils.

5. GLSEN 2011 National Climate Survey on experiences of LGBT pupils

- A. Kosciw, J.G., Greytak, E.A., Bartkiewicz, M.J., Boesen, M.J., & Palmer, N.A. (2012).
- B. The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in the US studies the safety of American Schools biannually in the National School Climate Survey: the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools. GLSEN has conducted a survey among LGBT youth between 13 and 20 years old (n=8,584) in 2011. These were young people from all 50 states in the US. 45.7% of these pupils indicated that a GSA was present at their school. The biannual study explores the prevalence of anti-LGBT expressions, the degree of victimisation, the effect of these negative experiences on the well-being and school performance of LGBT pupils, and the effect of interventions aimed at a safer school climate for LGBTs.
- C. The study shows that American schools are an unsafe place for LGBTs. A large majority is confronted with anti-LGBT expressions. 84.9% of pupils indicated that the word 'gay' is used in a negative way in the school, and 71.3% reported homophobic remarks. 91.4% of pupils indicated that this saddens them. LGBT pupils are absent more often due to negative experiences surrounding them being LGBTs (pupils who indicated they had a higher degree of victimization due to their sexual orientation were three times as likely to have missed a day of school in the past month than LGBTs who indicated a lower degree: 57.9% vs. 19.6%) and the negative experiences at school also result in impaired performance at school (pupils who were harassed for their sexual orientation or gender identity more often had lower grades than pupils who indicated that they were harassed less often: 2.9 vs. 3.2). GSAs are presented as a solution in the study. GSAs and similar groups can promote safety and form an important source of support for LGBT pupils. GSAs also contribute to creating a more 'welcoming' school climate.
- In schools with a GSA, pupils heard less homophobic remarks than in schools without a GSA. (77.5% of pupils at schools without a GSA compared to 64.5% of pupils at schools with a GSA indicated they heard homophobic remarks)
 - In schools with a GSA, there were more reports of staff intervention with homophobic remarks than in schools without a GSA. 19.8% of pupils in schools with a GSA and 12.0% of pupils in schools without a GSA indicated that school staff 'usually' or 'always' intervenes.
 - Pupils with a GSA experienced less victimisation related to their sexual orientation and gender identity. 23% of pupils with a GSA experiences a higher level of victimisation surrounding their sexual orientation and gender identity, compared to 38.5% of pupils without a GSA.
 - Pupils with a GSA felt unsafe due to their sexual orientation less often than pupils in schools without a GSA. (54.9% vs. 70.6%)
 - Pupils within GSAs have a stronger connection to their school community than pupils who were not involved with a GSA.

6. Strategies for reducing suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and discrimination among lesbian, bisexual, homosexual, and heterosexual adolescents in schools in western Canada.

- A. Saewyc, E.M., Konishi, C., Roze, H.A., Homma, Y. (2014)
- B. This study explored the correlation between the presence and duration (length of time) since the implementation of Gay-Straight Alliances in *secondary schools* in Canada's British Columbia, and the experiences of lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, and 'mostly heterosexual' and 'exclusively heterosexual' pupils with gay discrimination, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. The study was conducted by analysing data from the British Columbia Adolescent Health Survey (n=21,708), among students in schools with a GSA or policy against homo/bi/transphobia which was implemented three years ago or less than three years, compared to pupils in schools without GSA or policy against homo/bi/transphobia.
- D. Lesbian, homosexual, and bisexual pupils had a lower chance of being discriminated against, having suicidal thoughts, and attempting suicide, especially when there was a policy and a GSA for more than three years. Policy has a less consistent effect than GSAs. Heterosexual boys (this was not found for

heterosexual girls) also had a lower chance of suicide ideation and attempts in schools where a policy and GSAs had been present for a longer period.

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