
Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Students in Luxembourg (Supplement)

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Die Einstellung angehender Lehrkräfte gegenüber lesbischen, schwulen und bisexuellen (LGB) Schüler*innen in Luxemburg

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The cultural diversity of Luxembourg's students has been under investigation in many contexts. Large-scale studies such as PISA (Weis et al., 2020) and the Luxembourg School Monitoring Programme ÉpStan have delved into achievement and learning disorders (Ugen et al., 2021), by which they identified major educational inequalities along axes such as social origin, gender and migration background. The topic of the student's sexual diversity, with sexual orientation being conceptualized as an axis of inequality, has been mostly unaddressed. More and more young people identify as LGBTQIA+ around the world (Richter, 2023), and Luxembourg's LGBTQIA+ Centre CIGALE reports significantly more educational work on this matter in Luxembourgish schools and youth centers in 2019 compared to previous years (CIGALE, 2020). The Luxembourgish population generally holds positive attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ people, yet testimonies from Luxembourgish LGBTQIA+ youth indicate that they still face victimization in Luxembourgish schools because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (Meyers et al., 2019). In this context, teachers with positive attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ students represent an important protective resource in schools, as studies indicate those teachers are more likely to prevent homophobic behavior and make LGBTQIA+ students feel safer at school (e.g., Kosciw et al., 2022).

We investigated Luxembourg's pre-service teachers' explicit attitudes toward LGB students in an online questionnaire study. The self-report measures included the pre-service teachers' enthusiasm, self-efficacy, and prejudice about teaching LGB students. We also aimed to identify possible predictors for the attitudes of the pre-service teachers, such as hypergendering (i.e., following traditional gender role beliefs), prior social contact with LGB people (within family and friend networks), age, gender, sexual orientation, religiosity, and right-wing conservatism. A total of 138 Luxembourgish pre-service teachers (71.7 % women and 28.3 % men, with 79 % of the sample aged between 21 and 26) filled out the questionnaire. The focus of our investigation was on students' sexual orientation and not gender expression, which is why only attitudes toward LGB students and not, for example, transgender or intersexual students were investigated.

The obtained data indicated that Luxembourgish pre-service teachers (both men and women) mainly held positive attitudes toward LGB students (see Fig. 1). As expected, correlation and multiple regression analyses revealed that pre-service teachers with more social contact with LGB people in their friends' networks had significantly more positive attitudes toward LGB students. Furthermore, pre-service teachers with higher hypergendering and religiosity levels had significantly more negative attitudes toward LGB students. To our surprise, pre-service teachers who had more social contact with LGB family members, as well as homosexual pre-service teachers, held significantly more negative attitudes toward LGB students.

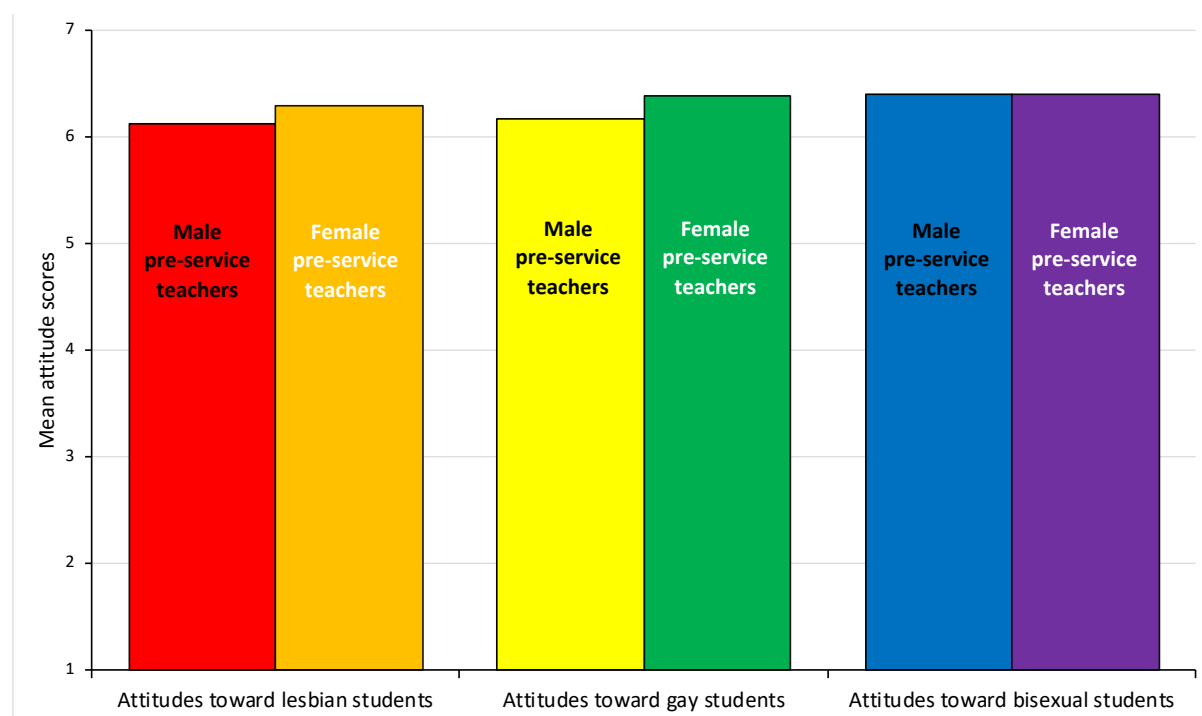
Hence, contact with LGB people per se may not be enough to foster positive attitudes. It may come down to the quality and nature of the contact (e.g., similarity). In addition, internalized homonegativity (i.e., the internalization of discriminatory societal messages regarding gender and sexual orientation by LGBTQIA+ persons) may negatively impact LGB-pre-service teachers' self-perceptions. In this way, LGB pre-service teachers may view LGB students more negatively even though they may share the same marginalization experiences. Pre-service teacher's age, gender, and levels of right-wing conservatism did not reliably predict attitudes.

In general, these results suggest that Luxembourgish pre-service teachers did not hold prejudice against any particular sexual orientation. It is, however, essential to bear in mind that a questionnaire on this topic is prone to social desirability bias and that our sample of pre-service teachers represents primarily attitudes of Luxembourg's youth. At the same time, previous research indicates that older in-service teachers might show more prejudice against LGB students (e.g., Hall & Rodgers, 2019).

Still, our results hold important implications for optimizing teacher education programs. First, as we found that maintaining friendships with LGB people was associated with more benevolent attitudes toward LGB students, teacher education programs may want to promote contact between their pre-service teachers and the LGBTQIA+ community. Course directors could, for instance, invite LGBTQIA+ experts as guest speakers to foster dialogue with their community and understanding regarding LGBTQIA+ students' issues among pre-service teachers. Second, as we identified high levels of hypergendering to predict negative attitudes toward LGB students, teacher education programs could address this issue by organizing awareness workshops (e.g., in cooperation with LGBTQIA+ supporting organizations) or by implementing interventions where pre-service students learn to question stereotypical thinking. Assuming that such biases are more common in older teachers (Hall & Rogers, 2019), these practical implications may be even more relevant for in-service teachers.

In conclusion, Luxembourgish pre-service teachers have a good basis for supporting LGB students throughout their careers. In this context, further research could clarify whether these positive attitudes are translated into concrete actions to actively support LGB students at the beginning of the pre-service teacher's teaching careers.

Figure 1: Mean pre-service teachers' attitude scores toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual students by participants' gender (measured on a 7-point agreement scale; high scores suggest positive attitudes)



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