ACCEPTANCE, NOT JUST TOLERANCE

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Imagine a normal day in a class at a Philippine school.

A teacher is tirelessly sharing her knowledge to her students because she wants the young people to build a good foundation for the future and be the future. The students, on the other hand, will try to absorb the strangeness and complexity of the lessons and will try to dissect and translate it into their personal mastery.

How I wish that classroom setting could be as ideal and passionate as that. But, it is high time to stop romanticising things at school because the ugly parts of it are screaming loud, wanting to be addressed. Because in the present time, there are many cases where the school fails to live up to its billing as it becomes a place for violence rather than safety especially for the members of the LGBT community.

According to a report from the Human Rights Watch last year, many students in our country have become victims of discrimination and violence due to their sexual preference and gender identity. While this sounds alarming, what’s worse is that their schools failed to devise policies that could assist them with their struggles.
When a student comes out as gay or when the class discovers that he or she is a member of the LGBT community, they instantly become a subject of a hate campaign and physical abuse.

Some victims got name-called, ridiculed, and bullied in class or in the school canteen while others got punched in the school corridor or being humiliated in social media just because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or what others labelled as “different.”

These cases have resulted in the disruption of lives, with victims deciding to move to a different school or isolate themselves from their classmates in fear of getting bullied or assaulted.

More than the negative impacts on their attendance and performance at school, this treatment to the LGBT members can vastly affect their self-confidence, perspectives about life and overall well-being, which could further lead to depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, or worst, suicide.

This is why it is crucial for teachers, parents, students, and the school, in general, to address this issue and take part in providing the support for the LGBT members. Let us start creating a more inclusive culture at school and at home, where they feel accepted not just tolerated.
The school must create policies and curriculum opportunities providing learning areas for all students about sexual diversity using positive information and resources. Teachers and parents must always offer support and accept these people for who they are. Meanwhile, other students can provide help by observing and reporting cases of bullying and abuse against LGBT members to assess how frequent it happens and what measures could be devised to prevent them.

Again, what these people need is not just tolerance, but acceptance. After all, we become what our hearts desire so let us not stop them from being the person they want to be.

References: