

Nowadays, most LGBTQ or gender-expansive students are still bullied verbally by their peers or even teachers. Some groups opposed to marriage equality even maliciously attacked gender education frequently, misleading parents (<https://kairos.news/66850>) to believe that gender education will “induce” their children to become homosexual. However, as a student and also a transgender student, I deeply feel that Taiwan lacks appropriate gender education. It is certain and urgent that Taiwan needs more comprehensive gender education to guide people to understand and respect sexual minorities.

I am a trans female. As far as what I have experienced in school and society, I must say that even a decade after the *Gender Equity Education Act* came into force, I still experience all kinds of discrimination in school. Besides, it is more frightening that the discrimination, instead of being expressed clearly, is now hiding behind a long-term hostile environment or attitude. The invisible discrimination is hard to be aware of but yet more harmful. Take my school as example. The school has been strictly promoting the idea that a boy is not allowed to enter the girls’ dorm for safety reason, even through the campus speaker system to announce it. This warning also comes in the school weekly journal repeatedly. However, the school always ignores the fact that some girls who does not live in the dorm still enter the girls’ dorm. In addition, the school also refuses to change the way to push for the idea. For example, the school could have chosen to say, “Students who do not live in the dorm should not enter the dorm,” focusing on the behaviour instead of on the people, since the current way of dealing with this situation presumes that all male are potential criminals. Another example is the approach that the school staff adopts. The school staff treats girls and boys differently. If we report to other staff with higher position in school, we would often get the response, “A boy should never argue with a girl.” This is not logical at all. All these instances regard a certain group of people as sexual offenders, which is disrespectful and offending to people. The above-mentioned behaviour based on stereotypes also puts a great deal of pressure on students of sexual minorities.

When the school needs students to do chores, the campus speaker system usually says, “Boys in the class, please...” instead of saying, “Whoever is stronger in the class, please...” When we distinguish people based on their biological sex, it seems harmless. However, it connotes unnecessary sexual stereotype, which causes great pain to gender-expansive students. (Other gender issues in school are summarised in the following paragraphs.)

1. An overview of gender issues in school<sup>1</sup>

Gender issues are always controversial no matter what, but if everyone has a chance to understand it in school, the school environment will be more friendly. I understand that in a patriarchal society, it is very challenging to discuss gender equality. However, this is our life-long lessons that we must take. To achieve real equality, not only the policy and the law have to adjust, but also everyone has to change their attitude and value through education. This is the most important role of school education and all students will grow, develop, and eventually benefit throughout their lifetime. “School” that I mention here is not just about the school’s policy or regulations. Instead, every staff and student in school matters. All groups and individuals in school should truly understand the essence of equality when they interact with each other, and this is the most essential part to all members within. School, as a studying venue, should provide more than just the content in textbooks. The way everyone in school interacts is the knowledge that we cherish for

---

<sup>1</sup> Students’ rights, obligation and school regulations: the comparison between school regulations in Taiwan and the United States from the legal point of view, a research done by the former Student Affairs Committee, Ministry of Education, also mentions that it is harder to notice sexism than racism. School members are likely to take everything for granted, ignoring the biased social expectations and gender roles based on biological sex. (pp.26, Question 7) As a result, I would like to point out here that, especially in my high school, all members in the school, including students, teachers and relevant staff, do neglect the importance of gender issues. (Here I mean their attitude and values that are displayed, instead of neglecting this issue when establishing school regulations.)

good.

1.1. Details of relevant events

1.1.1. Gender issues in the announcement through campus speaker system

As I have previously mentioned, the devil is in the details. We are inclined to ignore stereotypes. Biological boys are stigmatised in school and biological girls are often overly protected. When we listen to the announcement coming from the school speaker system saying, “Class A, please assign some boys to the office to carry textbooks,” we should be aware of the connotation in that announcement. The announcement could have been made as “Please assign some classmates who are strong to...” The problem in the current announcement is that it implies boys are stronger so they should do more chores. As for girls, it sounds like that since they are not that strong, they should just stay in the classroom and mind their own business. This kind of statement will gradually influence everyone’s attitude in the long run. Some people might think that I am too picky and feel that it is not that serious and not harmful either. However, discrimination still happens in our daily life, despite the fact that the government has set up plenty of gender-related regulations to protect sexual minorities’ rights. What we say and what we do all reflect our values, and these values are having significant impact on everyone. As a result, our behaviour is what matters because that will influence every member in the society. Without the adjustment of our values, it is useless to just amend the laws. In our civics class, we learn those theories in social science, but it is more important that we foster the ethical sensitivity to become aware of these issues and notice the inequality.

1.1.2. The red line implying that boys are more harmful

A few months ago, the school drew a thick red line in front of the girl’s dorm, and the weekly announcement through the public speaker always says, “Boys are not allowed to enter the girls’ dorm. If any girl needs someone to help you with bed sheet, please only let your girl classmate or mom help. Boys are not allowed to cross the red line. If any boy does, he will be punished according to the rules.” The announcement is actually the reason why I write this article, and it also leads me to deeper research on gender issues.<sup>2</sup> The problem in the announcement is that it presumes boys are extremely dangerous. Some people may argue that most sexual offenders are biological male so it is reasonable to make such an assumption and prevent them from entering the girls’ dorm. However, statistics without deep analysis can only present the surface of the issue. Why are most sexual offenders male? It is because we keep emphasising that “boys are dangerous while girls are always well-behaved”. Besides, it is not a problem for a man to talk about sex publicly, while it is for a woman. All these contribute to the fact that most sexual offenders are male. Let’s go back to this example. Does the red line only suppress boys? Actually no. The red line also reinforce the stigma that “girls are squeezed by boys and do not know how to protect themselves.”<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> To me, other events happening to me previously must have also influenced me to a certain degree. This event was just a turning point. I felt offended but did not know how to express. I only knew that I was mistreated. I could not tell what maliciousness was but I felt that I was maliciously treated. Afterwards, the way I saw this world changed and plenty of discrimination also emerged...As a result, now I equip myself with knowledge and wisdom, determining to look back and figure out what on earth happened, in the hope that there will not be another me.

<sup>3</sup> A female classmate once jokingly said to me, “As long as I yell out now, ‘What are you doing? Why did you touch me?’, even if you did not move at all, the school staff would reckon that you pervert are going to commit crimes!” Her joking statement made me wonder for a long time, “What is wrong here?”

<sup>4</sup> When writing this article, I surveyed some people’s view about the the red line in the dorm. Most girls did not think “that made any

### 1.1.3. School staff showing prejudice against boys

The following issue might be too subjective. However, I believe that if we survey every student about the behaviour of staff in school, we will only reach one conclusion. That is, the staff is seriously biased and shows prejudice against boys. In any dispute between a boy and a girl, the staff always says, “A boy should never argue with a girl. Just admit what you have done.” However, if he did not do something, he should not say that he does. It is just like a criminal who should not or cannot ask someone else to serve their sentence. Why shouldn't a boy argue with a girl? Or why should a boy become a scapegoat for a girl? Another example happens in class. When the class gets too noisy and the teacher cannot really identify the one who makes noises first, then the teacher usually asks all boys to stand as punishment. I think I will not repeat the same problem. And many boys are upset about it, so their attitude changes. They feel that if people think they are naughty, then they will just act naughty. Then, seeing this, the school staff is persuaded again that boys are more naughty, which becomes a vicious circle. This is what we do not want to see. As a result, the staff in school should gain some knowledge about gender and gender issues.

Lastly, it is about the way the school treats sexual minorities. There are still dress codes and restrictions on students' hair length and hairstyle. However, in order to face the society with the authentic me after I graduate, I decided to keep long hair before graduation. The school staff privately asked me to talk about this. At then, I did not come out as transgender but the staff just kept questioning me. Therefore, I told him that I am transgender. After he heard this, he started to emphasise that he met similar students before. He even said that I am still a boy again and again. This kind of statement is really harmful to transgender students. He even suggested that I have my hair cut and put on a wig outside the school. This is totally nonsense. I would argue that the school's demand on me to abide by the rules is actually serious harassment.

As the above-mentioned examples have shown, all students and teachers should acquire knowledge about gender and be aware of gender issues, which cannot be achieved by solely the amendment to laws.

---

difference because no boys passed there”. On the other hand, boys were not willing to talk about this event.