

Report on the Sexual Rights of Children and Teenagers in Taiwan under the CRC

Sex Education in the Family

Due to conservatism or avoidance of awkwardness, Taiwanese parents tend to not talk about sex to their children. However, when people suggest schools should educate students more about sex, some parents think their children might be led astray. Therefore they object the idea and stop school from providing knowledge about sex.

Case studies:

1. One of my classmates was clueless about love and relationships when he was in elementary school. He said, "I had a crush on someone and I didn't know what to do about this feeling. I asked my parents but they wouldn't tell me anything and just said I should focus on my studies. So I asked a classmate who told me I should tell her directly and then kiss her. I followed his advice but I got slapped on the face and she hated me ever since."
2. The Taiwan Gender Equity Education Association produced an educational video "Shall We Swim?" in 2011 which mentions erogenous zones and orgasms. This video was, therefore, severely criticized by parents. This incident also caused a heated debate on mass media.

Children and teenagers will one day come to understand what sex is. If parents fail to educate their children and stop the education system from doing so, how should the next generation learn about sex?

Sex Education in School

As a student, my schools leave much to be desired when it comes to love and relationships.

1. Taiwan's health education emphasizes the introduction of sexual organs and mentions little about love and relationships.
2. In the hopes of increasing the number of students going to university, most schools often use health education hours for other subjects.
3. Parents' lack of interest in health education discourages schools from providing decent education.

Case studies:

1. Junior high classmate A said, "Even I am in senior high school now, I still don't know what a condom looks like. And health education hours are either allocated for main subjects or whatever other subjects. Health education is never taken seriously."

2. Junior high classmate B said, “We had the same health education teacher for all the three years in junior high. He said he would leave sex education to the last year but nothing happened in that year. So I never had an hour of sex education in the entire junior high school years.”

3. Junior high classmate C said, “My teacher taught sex education like biology. He roughly mentioned the construction of reproductive organs and the differences between male and female puberty but this was totally meaningless. There was so much more to learn about sex but he just wouldn’t teach us.”

Wrong Ideas

It is really important to help students understand gender issues, love and relationships. It’s a real shame that school fails to educate students properly due to lack of training for teachers or opposition from some conservatives. I think the government should make a policy to include relevant knowledge in the curriculum. I believe children and teenagers have the right to proper education instead of having to resort to the Internet for not necessarily right information. It is already a big issue that school doesn’t have enough resources to teach students and what makes it worse is that some educators don’t know how to teach gender equity or even make inappropriate statements.

Case studies:

1. Recently there was a parent-led protest against including teaching materials about BDSM and open relationship in fear of leading children astray. However, BDSM and open relationship are not deviations or wrongful behaviors; they are simply a form of sex developed by curiosity. However, no one tries to guide the parents out of the deeply-rooted misunderstanding so they continue to behave like this.

2. Classmate A said, “My teacher mentioned the term “homophobia” in class and a boy yelled, ‘Then I must be homophobic because homosexuality sickens me.’ Other classmates also started to make highly inappropriate statements such as ‘Yeah, they should be bombed to death,’ and ‘That’s a good idea. They should totally get out of my sight!’ This chaos continued for several minutes but the teacher didn’t stop them and just casually replied, ‘Don’t say that.’ There was a closeted boy in my class, who went to the toilet and cried in there during recess. Teachers are required to teach gender equity every semester but they fail to deal with issues like this. I think there must be something wrong about this.”

3. Classmate B said, “My teacher finished her class earlier and chatted with us about love secrets. However she said, ‘As a woman in Taiwan, you have to act soft and sweet or otherwise no man would like you. You need to

wear a skirt to be pretty. And you have to do chores or otherwise no one would marry you and your in-laws would dislike you.’ I was very troubled by her statement because she showed no respect for women. When an educator instills wrong ideas in school, how can students learn to uphold gender equity?”

4. Classmate C said, “We wear a white uniform top to school and a teacher said to us, ‘I don’t know why you girls wear non-white bras? Are you trying to seduce boys?’ I was so shocked to hear that and I felt so humiliated.”

Gender Equity

Although men and women were born physically different, can that difference be used as an excuse for inequality? The answer is no! Inequality can be found everywhere against not only women but also men. Stereotypes are imposed to you and me and we are defined by these unwritten rules: men are tough and women are soft; science is for men and literature is for women. We can try our best to ignore these stereotypes but when society as a whole upholds these ideas, it would be very difficult to ignore them and we may be cast in these social modes.

Case studies:

1. There are indeed physical differences between men and women but does that mean men are supposed to perform better in physical education than women? Why is it that men and women are evaluated differently in physical education and men are required to reach a higher bar of physical achievement? A physically weak boy has to either practice excessively or is doomed to fail while a physically excellent girl can easily get a full mark.

2. Although gender inequality in dress codes has been reduced, it still leaves a lot to be desired. A major problem still remains: there are no uniform shorts for girls! In this case, if girls want to wear shorts in summer, they can only wear sports shorts to go with their uniform. A worse case is when there are no sports shorts for girls either, then they can only wear pants or skirts in summer. This is very unfair for them. (Translator’s note: in Taiwan, there are two types of uniforms: school uniform for everyday wear and sports uniform for physical education.)

3. Some schools have dormitories but the written and unwritten dormitory rules are very different for boys and girls such as curfews and whether the opposite sex can enter the dorm.

Outdated Rules

Unreasonable rules and policies were produced in old, conservative times, many of which remain intact without being revised to keep up with the times. I find this really inappropriate.

For example:

1. Classmate A said, "I was a high achiever in school and I was dating a schoolmate. My homeroom teacher was afraid that I would be distracted and in turn unable to be admitted to my first choice of university. He threatened that I had to break up with my girlfriend or otherwise he would ask the parents of both sides to come to school to deal with the issue."
2. Gender is no longer a dichotomy and you can be biologically male who has gender identity as a woman. However, school rules stipulate that if you go to the toilet of the opposite sex, you will get a major demerit.
3. School rules stipulate that if students of the opposite sex hold hands or hug each other in school, they will get a demerit because these behaviors are considered detrimental to the school reputation.