

Education and Management: Providing LGBTQ Students with Better Support in School Settings in China

Junyi Lyu^{1,a,*}

¹University International College, Macau University of Science and Technology, Macau, China
a. 2009853gut30003@student.must.edu.mo

*corresponding author

Abstract: In recent years, several advances in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) rights have taken place in many Western societies around the world. By contrast, in numerous places in China, misunderstanding, discrimination, ignorance, and isolation toward LGBTQ students persists. The unfair treatment that LGBTQs have received, the social pressure they withstand, and their mental health condition were already serious problems and this is set to continue. This paper believes that education plays a vital role in combatting these issues and protecting the equal rights of the LGBTQ community. Changes made by schools can be significant when dealing with LGBTQ issues and even lead to the transformation of social and cultural norms. This thesis, based on ‘Queer theory’, aims to discover the current situation on campus for LGBTQ students and to open a discussion on how to provide LGBTQ students with better support from educational and school management in China.

Keywords: LGBTQ students, queer theory, mental health

1. Introduction

“There are 17 sustainable development goals, all based on a single guiding principle: to leave no one behind. We will only realise this vision if we reach all people, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity”

– Ban Ki-Moon, 8th Secretary-General of the United Nations

Agi Veres, the country director of the United Nations Development Programme in China once said that in the Asia-Pacific region, sexual minorities are usually among the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups in the society and this is nonetheless true in China. Focusing on the minorities’ needs is indispensable for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because the fundamental principle and mission of the SDGs is to ‘leave no one behind’ [1].

Looking at international human rights work across the world over the past decade, international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) are increasingly concerned about the issues of sexual minorities, and the protection of equal rights of sexual minorities has become an important part of the human rights agenda all over the world. Chinese government representatives have spoken about several positive initiatives on issues related to LGBTQs at international conferences in recent years. For example, during the 2014 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women review, Mu Hong, the Deputy Director of the National Working Committee on Children and Women of the State Council declared that “regardless of their sexual orientations, Chinese citizens are protected by law” [1]. It seems that attitudes toward the LGBTQ community are

becoming increasingly liberal than in previous years. However, we have to recognise that protection issues of sexual minorities in China have not yet attracted sufficient attention in society. This author believes that the issues of sexual minorities do not receive enough attention in school and this is supported by research evidence [2,3,4]. This report will explore these issues in greater depth.

Previous domestic studies related to this topic mainly focused on the mental health of homosexuals; the high-risk sexual behaviors of homosexuals and bisexuals; as well as heterosexuals' attitudes toward homosexuality. Little attention has been given to the difficulties encountered by the entire LGBTQ student community on campus and the impact on their mental health. This paper is separated into five sections. This section frames the problem. The second section provides an overview of the issues by introducing some key concepts. Then, in the third section, Queer theory is used to encourage a rethink of gender issues and to move beyond the current binary view of gender. The fourth section explores past research on this topic and provides information for readers to better understand the general living conditions of LGBTQ youths in contemporary China. It also allows readers to clearly recognise that LGBTQs still experience exclusion and discrimination in the school environment. The final section brings the debate to a close and makes recommendations for measures that can be taken by schools to promote sexual diversity education and provide better support to LGBTQ students in school.

2. Key Concepts

Taking into consideration that the embedded ideas of gender studies can be complex and professional, this section will briefly review some key concepts to help understand the content and the purpose of the study.

2.1. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

LGBTQ means Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer, and it is an acronym usually used to describe sexual minorities. The definition of sexual minorities relates to two different components: sexual orientation and gender identity [5]. Sexual orientation is an enduring pattern of romantic or sexual attraction (or a combination of these) to persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to either sex or more than one gender. Nowadays, terminologies like heterosexuality (straight), homosexuality (gay and lesbian) are the most often used terms to describe different sexual orientations [6]. When a person is only attracted to people of the same-sex, is simultaneously attracted to multiple genders, or is not sure about which gender he or she is attracted to, this person belongs to a minority in sexual orientation. In contrast to sexual orientation, gender identity refers to the individual's internal sense of his or her own gender. Instead of a binary concept, gender identity includes 'gradations of masculinity to femininity and maleness to femaleness, as well as identification as neither essentially male nor female' [7]. If a person's gender identity is not the same as his or her biological sex at birth, the person belongs to a gender minority.

2.2. Gender Expression

Gender expression refers to an individual expressing their gender through outward appearance such as dress and mannerism. When one's gender expression is not consistent with the gender norms of society, he or she is regarded as a minority in gender expression. For example, a man who likes to dress as a woman, or a woman who likes to dress as a man, can be considered as being a minority in gender expression. Sexual and gender minorities refer to all people who belong to these minority groups of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, including homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender, intersexuality, and so on.

For a long time, sexual minorities have been marginalised, discriminated against and even threatened with violence across many cultural contexts because their behavior patterns contravene gender norms generally accepted by the mainstream, dominant, normative society. Sexual minorities can also face discrimination in school; they can experience homophobic bullying or gender-based or sexual-based harassment or violence.

2.3. Homophobia

The term homophobia was first used by Weinberg in 1972 to describe heterosexual people's fear of homosexual men and women, including the irrational dread, hatred and intolerance toward homosexual people [8]. Homophobia contains all kinds of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are perceived as being part of the LGBTQ community and it directly affects bullying behavior toward LGBTQ students in an educational setting, namely homophobic bullying [4]. Bullying has traditionally been understood to mean a physically larger person or a person with better social status using his or her power to frighten, threaten or offensively control others [9]. Bullying is a negative action, and intended coercion, aggression or humiliation is usually involved to make the victim feel impotent [10]. In past research, issues of LGBTQ violence (or gender bullying) in schools are usually examined from the perspective of educational psychology, which defines the problem as an anti-social, individual, aggressive behaviour with discriminatory attitudes. However, from this perspective, gendered social dynamics, power differences, as well as social norms that foster violence are overlooked [11].

2.4. Gender Policing

Recently, a more acute concept of 'gender policing' has been proposed which allows us to rethink gender bullying from a sociological angle. Gender policing refers to the imposition or enforcement of normative gender expressions on an individual who is perceived as not adequately conforming, through appearance or behaviour, to the sex that he or she was born with. Judith Butler has argued that the repudiation of individuals who are non-normatively gendered can be a way of creating one's own gender identity [12]. Gender policing serves to devalue or delegitimise expressions that deviate from normal conceptions of masculine and feminine, thus reinforcing the gender binary. Ringrose and Renold have proposed that there are a lot of 'normative cruelties' that are viewed as normal and harmless acts within the gender regulation system [11]. The minor example of verbal policing is perceived to be harmless and nearly everyone is a participant [13]. However, when these normative cruelties become increasingly severe or frequent, they evolve into bullying. Gender policing can be part of the 'day-to-day reality' of youth. All kinds of gender policing can be damaging and LGBTQ youths are the most vulnerable group under the gender regulation system [13]. A national survey in the United States found that the vast majority of the LGBTQ students had been abused at school and more than half of LGBTQ students said that they felt unsafe in schools due to their different sexual orientation or gender expression [14]. With China's large population base, there are many LGBTQ students who are bullied on campus.

2.5. Mental Health

The mental health of sexual minorities is also worrying. Studies have shown that LGBTQ students have psychological impacts from their oppression in society - they tend to have a lower level of self-esteem and self-confidence, stronger depression, and a greater chance of attempting suicide [5]. In Russell's research Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender-related school victimisation is strongly linked to young adult mental health and the risks of STDs and HIV and increasing levels of depression and suicidal tendencies among males could also be explained by the high rate of LGBTQ school

victimisation[15]. Domestic research in China has found that college students generally hold a negative and conservative attitude toward LGBTQ groups [16]. Sexual minorities in China are also facing a series of negative pressures that affect their mental health such as social stigmatisation, internalised homophobic concepts, prejudice, discrimination, violence, pressure from family, and exposure or concealment of their sexual orientation. These factors have caused them to have serious mental disorders such as depression, substance dependence and abuse, and even suicidal tendencies [3].

The most obvious result of bullying is that it affects the academic performance of LGBTQ students. In the United States, students who are often bullied because of their sexual orientation have significantly lower scores than students who are not bullied and they have twice the dropout rate compared to the average student nationwide after graduating from secondary school [14]. The long-term consequences are that LGBTQ students who are subjected to bullying at school are more likely to experience health-threatening behaviours such as drug addiction, suicide or dangerous sexual behaviour. It is worth noting that not only is bullying affecting the suicide intentions of LGBTQ students, but merely witnessing the occurrence of bullying at school also has a significant correlation with the suicide intentions of students [17].

In the global policy debate, much emphasis has been placed on the role of education as the solution to addressing gender violence [18]. However, violence and bias as an integral part of schooling may have consequences for LGBTQ students' development that go beyond the here-and-now of childhood to impact social and economic consequences in adulthood, as they experience fear and risk of injury while at school. To make sure that all LGBTQ students feel safe and comfortable in school, it is the schools' responsibility to address all these biases that affect LGBTQ youth.

3. Theoretical Framework

The term "Queer" was first put forward by Teresa de Lauretis in her "Queer Theory", though its meaning today is quite different from the original definition [19]. Queer can refer to an identity category and can be used to represent all the people that feel marginalised and are opposed to the heterosexual hegemony, including individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transvestite and S&M. But, more than a sexual identity, it can also be an orientation towards gender and sexual difference no matter what one's gender or sexual orientation - according to Giffney, "queer" is a 'site of permanent becoming' [20]. Based on individual differences but with the same interest in resisting heterosexual hegemony, the performance of queer lifestyle, ways of thinking, and behavioral habits together comprise "queer culture" [21]. This is a critical aspect of queer in that it is a category that can include everyone as it is a way of life rather than an "us vs them" category or binary.

Queer theory is grounded in gender and sexuality and is aimed at disrupting gender and sexual binaries. Queer theorists hold the idea that gender identity and sexual orientation are not 'natural' but formed through social and cultural processes [22]. One important aspect of queer theory is to challenge the strict dichotomic structure of male and female binary categories. On the issue of opposition to the gender bipartite structure (male and female), Judith Butler is the most authoritative theorist. Following Foucault's theoretical background, she questioned the need for a fixed female identity and explored a radical political possibility that criticised various identification categories [23].

Another important aspect of queer theory is to challenge the heterosexual hegemony. In traditional sex and gender concepts, the most powerful basis for heterosexuality is the relationship between physical sex, social gender identity and sexual desire. That is to say, a person's physiological sex determines his gender characteristics and heterosexual desires. The relationship between these three elements is challenged in queer theory. Heterosexuality can be normalised by the fact that, in the Kinsey report, more than 50% of men and 30% of women have had same-sex sexual experiences during their lifetime [24]. In challenging the strict classification of physiological sex, gender and

sexual orientation, Butler's 'gender performativity' theory is very important. In her essay '*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*', Butler proposed the gender performativity theory based on phenomenology and feminism [23]. Butler advocates for people to understand gender as a performance in which an individual agent acts. In Butler's theory, gender is essentially a performative repetition of acts associated with a male or female and the actions appropriate for men and women have historically been transmitted to produce a social atmosphere that both maintains and legitimises a seemingly natural gender binary [23]. For Butler, the seemingly 'natural' coherence of the categories of sex, gender and sexuality is culturally constructed through the repetition of stylised actions in time and these acts are in turn informed by existing social constructions of gender [23]. By analysing and understanding a way where gender is shared and historically constituted, the production of gender can occur differently and go beyond the socially constructed binary upon which heterosexuality depends. Gender can become fluid rather than fixed to the sexual organ that identifies a girl/boy.

However, there are some critiques of queer theory. One is the 'ideological colonisation', proposed by Pope Francis, meaning queer theory may threaten the family and heterosexuality [25]. What concerns him was that the expansion of queer may damage the established family system, disturb social order or undermines social stability. I am not sure that is something to worry about. For Bruno Perreau, the rejection of queer theory can be understood by people's anxieties about national identity and minority politics [26].

In my opinion, like all other theories, queer theory has both benefits and drawbacks when it is considered in relation to the practical dynamics of normative culture and society. Is queer theory a utopia? Or is its purpose to raise utopic possibilities? As a perspective, queer theory has special significance in a society like China. For a long time, people have regarded heterosexuality as the normal state and homosexuality as abnormal. In China, some people still regard homosexuality as a disease and want to treat or curse them instead of trying to understand them [1]. However, it could be argued that this is not the problem of homosexuals themselves but the problem of social structure. Under the current social norm, heterosexuals hate homosexuals, and homosexuals sometimes hate themselves because they are not 'normal'. Now, queer theory challenges the 'nature' of heterosexuality, raising the possibility of taking sexual orientation out of gender identity. A civilised and mature society should tolerate and understand diversification. It is believed that queer theory is the strongest argument for acceptance and understanding towards sexual and gender diversity, which is no longer a binary opposition between hetero and homosexuals but places all of society on a spectrum of identification based on both their gender and their sexual preferences. Furthermore, the impact of queer theory is not limited to homosexuals but shows that gender and sexual diversity is normative rather than a socially imposed binary. It inspires us to hold the view that it is not enough to strive for homosexuality alone to be normalised, but also to protect everyone's potential as queers.

In sum, as a highly subversive theory, queer theory may completely reshape the way people think about problems, providing all marginalised minorities with weapons and power in society.

4. School Environment and Living Conditions for LGBTQ students in China

'Being LGBTI in China - A National Survey on Social Attitudes towards Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression (SOGIE) - was a report launched on May 17th, 2017 to mark the International Day Against Homophobia and nearly 30,000 LGBTQ people from all over China participated in the survey. The report found that the vast majority of LGBTQs in China are still facing discrimination in many aspects of their lives. Discrimination, marginalisation and violence against LGBTQ people occurs most frequently within the family (56.1%), followed by schools (39.6%) [1]. However, on the other hand, the report showed significant progress in several areas. Firstly, young people were obviously more open to sexual diversity [1]. The vast majority of young respondents to

the survey believed that sexual minorities should be treated equally and should fully enjoy the various social services. Secondly, most of the respondents actually supported the formulation and implementation of specific policies that respect LGBTQ status and protect them from discrimination [1]. It seems that people do not stubbornly adhere to negative or stereotyped attitudes towards sexual minorities nowadays in China; in most cases, they just do not understand the issue. It is worth noting that the report depicts a country that is undergoing huge transformation. People who are now hesitant because they do not have sufficient knowledge of the related gender issues know little about the fact that millions of people are affected by these issues. Therefore, there is a great opportunity to transform these people into supporters for the equal rights of LGBTQs. This could be one of the reasons why education and information on the basis of fact, including more objective media reporting on sexual diversity, is of paramount importance to promoting social progress. Generally speaking, in terms of social concepts, in the updating and dissemination of knowledge it is relatively easy to see results. From the perspective of queer theory, gender identity is fluid instead of fixed; if the idea of gender diversity can be introduced in education, society's acceptance of LGBTQs will almost certainly increase.

To better understand the current situation in China, the first thing to consider is the life experiences of sexual minorities. As mentioned above, nearly 40% of LGBTQ respondents reported that they have experienced unequal treatment in schools. The top three forms of discriminations frequently seen in schools are verbal abuse; comments on their appearance or the way they speak or act; and being treated coldly or shunned by teachers and classmates [1]. It can be seen that the most common form of unfair treatment and discrimination against LGBTQ students at school is verbal abuse. Discipline on their behaviors, including requirements to change the way they speak and act, is another form of discrimination that occurs again and again. They are forced to conform to this to cater to the sexual orientation and gender identity of heterosexuality. In addition, more serious forms of discrimination, such as bullying and physical violence, also occur from time to time.

One of the core characteristics in the situation of LGBTQ students is that the visibility of sexual minorities in social life is currently very low. 'Coming out of the closet' is a figure of speech for LGBTQs' disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In the UNDP research, the proportion of LGBTQ people who fully disclosed their gender identity, sexual orientation or gender expression in schools and the workplace was only about 5%. This issue has a complicated historical background and many reasons help to explain it. It seems that people tend to open up in a selective way: disclosing information only to their parents or relatives (most likely to be relatives of the same generation) in their family; in schools, less than half of respondents chose to partially disclose to their closest friends.

Unlike heterosexual students, who can easily disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, a student of a sexual minority who is "deeply closeted" or only "comes out" to some people will have to suppress or hide oneself. Because of the low visibility of sexual minorities in society, the two-sided nature of school to LGBTQs is also evident. On the one hand, sexual minorities hope to open up in school. On the other hand, incidences of unfair treatment and discrimination on campus are high. In the UNDP research of 2016, ID 7, a homosexual male student said that some of his classmates were not supportive after he 'came out'. He felt estranged from the class. For example, some classmates deliberately bumped into him when walking or tripped him for fun. He heard a lot of derogatory words and his academic performance was negatively affected by that environment. 'But later recovered as my classmates gradually accepted me', said ID 7. His experience shows that some students still hold a conservative attitude toward LGBTQ.

Another homosexual female student, S 1, shared her experience of another kind of pain. She was once caught kissing another female student in the school bathroom by the inspector. Perhaps because the inspector knew nothing about sexual minorities or could not accept it, the person said some very

derogatory words like ‘pervert’ and ‘abnormal’ towards S 1. Initially, the girl didn’t really care, but did after the inspector informed the girl’s father, triggering his high blood pressure [1]. Her experience shows that, due to the lack of understanding, teachers and classmates do not know what to do when facing LGBTQs. Some schools and teachers even hope to use their authority to change the sexual orientation and gender identity of LGBTQ students, which in turn causes more problems and harm to them. It is argued that real acceptance and equal treatment of LGBTQs in school environment remains a long-term goal.

5. Discussion and Suggestions

Based on Judith Butler’s theories with regard to the current situation outlined above, in order to better protect the rights and interests of LGBTQ students in schools, specific recommendations are proposed under the following five points: protecting LGBTQs from violence, eliminating misunderstandings, promoting gender-diverse education, carrying out gender diversity training with teachers, and creating an open culture and atmosphere in school.

5.1. Protecting LGBTQs from Violence

Surveys show that schools at all levels lack education on the diversity of genders [2,27]. As a result, misunderstandings toward LGBTQs in schools make discrimination a widespread phenomenon in China, manifested as verbal or physical violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault [4]. It is suggested that even a moderate decline in school violence for those who experience it can result in long-term health gains. So, reducing the dramatic disparities for the most vulnerable LGBTQ youth should be the priority in education and public health [15].

Accordingly, in the first place, schools should continue to pay attention to the risk of violence faced by LGBTQ students and increase the emphasis on anti-bullying work. It is suggested that schools establish special working groups on anti-violence and formulate specific rules and regulations.

Anti-bullying polices can protect LGBTQ students from violence to some extent. However, it is a palliative solution and does not attempt to shift cultural norms or open up opportunities for LGBTQs [28]. More measures should be taken by schools to support LGBTQ students and make sure of their full participation in school activities.

5.2. Eliminate Misunderstandings of LGBTQs

In the UNDP survey, many young respondents agreed with the de-pathological understanding of sexual minorities, which is consistent with the mainstream understanding of the international and domestic scientific community. The World Health Organization's (WHO) ICD-9 (1977) listed homosexuality as a mental illness; it was removed from the ICD-10 on 17th, May 1990. Chinese Society of Psychiatry removed homosexuality from its Classification of Mental Disorders in 2001. However, as renewal and dissemination of knowledge is a continuous process, there are still widespread misunderstandings of LGBTQs in Chinese society. Some of them even appear in professional and authoritative ways that deepens society’s pathological understanding of sexual minorities.

Therefore, it is recommended that school departments pay more attention to correcting the erroneous and outdated knowledge about sexual minorities and clear the obstacles for the dissemination of correct knowledge. For example, schools should ensure the complete de-pathologisation of sexual and gender minorities in teaching materials at all levels [1]. It is suggested that schools regularly review primary and secondary school textbooks and supplementary teaching materials and correct the errors and stigma of sexual minorities.

5.3. Promote Gender-diverse Education

In an earlier article, which explored the way teachers responded to student violence, schools were either silent or experienced failure when addressing issues around gender, sexuality or race [29]. One of the reasons for this could be that normative gender performances are so repetitive and insistent that they are taken for granted [11]. LGBTQs and students who do not conform to normal gender types are therefore experiencing ‘normative cruelties’ that are usually neglected. Based on this recognition, schools’ past anti-bullying programmes, including zero tolerance policies, character education and other interventions did not make a sustainable change [13]. It is argued that if we are going to completely address the issue of queer marginalisation in school context, the gender regulation system must be questioned and intervened in [13].

People in China are deeply influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism, dating back to ancient times. They have a deep-seated ethical and moral outlook so sexual minorities are generally in a closed state [30]. Butler’s queer theory of gender is therefore important here for providing people with a new angle to rethink gender issues. It is believed that while eliminating the misperceptions of LGBTQs, it is necessary to develop a gender-diverse education so that students can understand the multiple states of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Sexual education is a long-term process. It is expected that all young people in China can accept sexual education, and sexual diversity education should be included in the content of sexual education. For example, children can take curriculums on issues affecting LGBTQs, with schools granted discretion to choose what age to start these lessons. In addition, in the sexual education of young people, schools must not only face and inform the objective existence of sexual diversity but also guide students to accept others or themselves as they are [16].

5.4. Provide Educators with Gender Diversity Training

It seems that more training is needed for both professional development and pre-service education to prepare teachers to understand and challenge gender policing in their pedagogy and curriculum [13]. In China, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education should first include equal treatment of all students, including sexual minorities, into the professional ethics of teachers. Furthermore, schools should offer gender diversity training for managers, administrators, and front-line educators at all levels to increase educators’ consciousness of gender equality.

China’s LGBTQ communities and its supporters have also put in great efforts to educate the public. The Gay and Lesbian Campus Association of China (GLCAC), founded in 2006, was the first public welfare organisation in China to focus on the rights of LGBTQ youth and a campus-friendly environment. They promote equal rights and interests of LGBTQ students by advancing the development of LGBTQ youth communities, supporting teacher participation and conducting research. GLCAC has a programme called ‘supporting 230 teachers to talk about LGBTQ in the school environment’, which has proved to be very successful. The aim of the programme is to encourage teachers to conduct LGBTQ sexuality and gender diversity education courses on campus and to establish a friendly school environment from the perspective of teachers. So far more than 230 teachers have been trained under this programme and 80% of them are primary school teachers. Over 30% of the teachers held at least two gender activity courses after the training and more than 60 teachers insisted on gender education topics, such as gender norms, stereotypes, multiple genders and campus gender violence. A total of more than 150 educational activities have been carried out and over 7,600 students have participated [31]. They have accumulated a great deal of experience in gender diversity education, which should be drawn from and looked to be rolled out across China.

5.5. Create an Open Culture and Atmosphere in Schools

Campus culture, also known as school culture, is an integral part of social culture. School culture can be defined as the set of beliefs, consciousnesses, value orientations, thinking patterns, and rules that influence the function of a school in every aspect. More concrete issues such as student safety and interpersonal relationships, as well as the newspapers, clubs, and salons founded by students are also included and these can show the degree to which a school embraces cultural diversity [2].

Numerous researchers, educators, and educational organisations have provided ways to improve and create a positive school culture within the school community. The Empowering Youth Engaging School (EYES) initiative implemented by the National School Climate Center being one example. The Chinese society is also making progress in school culture reform and improvement. In the past, when dealing with homosexuality issues, generally schools used psychological guidance centers to provide psychological counseling to students. However, in research conducted by Yang, more than half of the interviewed students said that they would not go there for any advice. Even when the teacher emphasises its confidentiality, students still worry that teachers who are engaged in psychological counseling are also biased toward homosexuality groups [2]. At present, some universities in China have taken this issue seriously and are trying to find other ways to help the LGBTQ student community. In November 2003, the Shanghai Medical College of Fudan University set up an optional course entitled 'Homosexual Health and Social Science', the first ever in the history of Chinese universities [2]. Since then, students from universities in Beijing have actively participated in and organised many thematic volunteer activities. The Beijing Forestry University, Central University of Finance and Economics, and Beijing Normal University all held activities on the theme of the homosexual knowledge forum. The "Rainbow Club" approved by Sun Yat-sen University in 2006 is an academic student community that pays attention to the phenomenon of homosexuality [2].

In all, while some organisations working and popping up in universities in China, much more jobs still need to be done to make this much more widespread in school settings.

6. Conclusion

In general, current conditions for LGBTQ groups in China are not optimistic. The unfair treatment that LGBTQs have received, the social pressure they withstand, and their mental health condition were already serious problems and this is set to continue. This report believes that education plays a vital role in combatting these issues and protecting the equal rights of the LGBTQ community.

Firstly, 'coming out' can mean a lot of pressure and many challenges so many of the LGBTQ community have to suppress their sexuality or hide it whilst in school. In the past, Chinese schools' attitudes towards LGBTQ groups were passive and this attitude did not play a role in protecting the homosexual community. In the long run, this attitude opened up a vacuum for LGBTQ students to be victimized, pressured or bullied. Secondly, LGBTQ students still suffer from much discrimination in the school environment and this definitely can hurt the well-being of these students both physically and mentally, including academic underachievement, depression, dropout, and even suicide. Though the schools' anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies can protect LGBTQ students from violence to some extent, bullying remains common in the school setting. The author believes that a lot more can be done by schools to increase the acceptance of LGBTQs, provide LGBTQ students with a better school environment, open up more opportunities for LGBTQs and even further shift the cultural norms.

It is worth noting that there are signs of significant positive inter-generational change in social attitudes, with young people becoming more progressive in their attitudes to the LGBTQ community on all levels. It is suggested that if young people can accept appropriate education on gender diversity

in schools, the generational change will bring a friendlier social view and attitude towards sexual and gender minorities in the future, which is an optimistic sign.

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