



GENDERED VIOLENCE IN UK SCHOOLS: LISTENING TO STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS

Policy proposals from a North Yorkshire case study

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Introduction- why do we need to improve gendered violence education in schools?

- Currently, 20% of all offences recorded to the police constitute violence against women and girls
- Plan UK's recent study showed that just 56% of students feel they have adequate teaching on healthy sex and relationships
- Levels of child sexual abuse are highest amongst girls aged 15-17
- 1/3 of all reported child sexual abuse is perpetrated by other children
- The existing government curricula on this issue have not risen to meet these challenges

Methodology

- I conducted interviews in Ripon Grammar School and Ryedale School
- 30 students aged 12-18 and 4 members of staff
- The interviews were framed as a discussion, to elicit the thoughts, experiences and suggestions from interviewees.

Key Takeaways: how can this education be improved?

1) Form

- More effective in single-sex groups
- Must be a collaboration between specialist agencies and schools
- All staff need increased training before delivering this education
- More open, conversational sessions for students
- Must be consistent, and repeated throughout the year

2) Content

- Must be framed as 'gendered violence' and as a 'community' issue in which all students have a role to play. Gendered issues affecting men and women must be taught together to demonstrate the interconnectedness of cultural gender norms and their role in the ecology of violence.
- Both students and teachers need better training on what 'gendered violence' actually is, and how it manifests itself in emotional and verbal behaviours such as derogatory language.

3) Evaluation

- Systems must be implemented to check the level of understanding of these issues.
- "Student voice" forums must be implemented to bridge the gap between teachers' perceptions on the issue, and the lived experience of students.

'continuum of sexual violence';

A key concept developed by Liz Kelly (1988) that demonstrates how incidences from derogatory language to rape and femicide are interconnected. They are symptoms of a patriarchal system which condones male abuse, intrusion or coercion of women.

Some of the most fruitful questions asked were:

- What does gendered violence mean to you?
- What have been the main challenges in the last decade in providing education on gendered violence?
- (Students) How could you be better supported in understanding and tackling gendered violence?
- (Students) What do you think are the most influential factors shaping young people's attitudes towards gendered violence today?

The importance of national and local contexts

Any new curricula should take into account the challenges in the last decade for teachers and students. These include:

- 1) **The rise of social media**, especially misogynistic influencers such as Andrew Tate.
- 2) **Austerity**: schools have less money and time to engage with outside agencies on specialist PSICHE issues
- 3) **COVID**: behavioural issues which have emerged from lockdown learning. Overexposure of young people to harmful content at home
- 4) **Class**: white working-class boys, who are increasingly underperforming in academia. As a group who do not have adequate structures of support, and are becoming disillusioned, they are at higher risk to toxic male role models online.