EQUITY

cross curriculum perspectives

A professional development paper focussing on gender perspectives across the curriculum

to support learning outcomes

Just boys, just girls and just schooling:
Curriculum, behaviours (including bullying) and gender

Gender Equity
Curriculum Policy Directorate

INTRODUCTION

Disruptive and violent behaviours that occur on a daily basis in classrooms and the schoolyard continue to concern schools and the broader community.

This paper presents the view that these anti-social and violent behaviours, which include bullying, are linked to the construction of gender and power relations between boys and boys, boys and girls and girls and girls. The understanding of this link could lead to improvements in behaviours and learning outcomes.

The intention of this paper is therefore to promote professional discussion at all education sites including early years settings (childcare, kindergartens, and child parent centres) about ways to address these issues of behaviour in the context of curriculum, teaching and learning and the promotion of high-quality gender identity and relations. The contention is that this will also lead to improved academic and social learning outcomes.

The new South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountablity (SACSA) Framework through its distinctive elements, the Essential Learnings, Equity Cross Curriculum Perspectives and constructivist learning approaches will assist educators in their work.

The SACSA Framework is based on the belief that equity is and must be a major curriculum consideration.

Sources

A wide range of academic work and research carried out in Australia and overseas has been used to develop the information and ideas in this paper. In particular, the paper uses the workshop outline developed by Professor R.W. Connell, *Developing school-based, research-informed responses to issues about boys and masculinity* (August 1999, unpublished). In this outline Professor Connell describes a process that schools could use to address issues about behaviour management, curriculum and gender equity.

The process is supported by the five strategic directions set out in *Gender equity: a framework for Australian schools*, in particular 'Violence and school culture', 'Curriculum, teaching and learning' and 'Understanding the process of gender construction'.

Finally the paper uses examples of work undertaken in the Curriculum, Behaviour Management and Gender Project based on the experiences of learners and educators, Reception to Year 12, to illustrate the ideas put forward.

This project was conducted in the following schools: Mount Gambier East Primary School, Fisk Street Primary School, Elizabeth South Primary School, Windsor Gardens High School, The Heights Schools, and Gepps Cross Girls High School.

The project provided staff with an opportunity to examine student behaviour management and its links with gender and curriculum, teaching and learning. Different phases of the project were managed by the following project officers: Judith Clelland, Pam Paris and Helen Lindstrom and supported by the Gender Equity Curriculum and Policy Officers Shirley Dally and Louise Mather.

Broadmeadows Primary School students

UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S GOING ON

Exploring male and female behaviour differences

In schools as elsewhere, people are sorted by sex, that is by whether they are male or female. This biological sex division is however only part of the story and is, by itself, not helpful in making sense of what is going on in the behaviours and attitudes of girls and boys and in the assumptions about, and the attitudes towards, these. This is where the concept of gender comes in. Sex and gender are different in that sex is biological, something we are born with, while gender is something that is of human making — a construction (that is, not biologically determined). One of the central ideas to support educators in making progress in understanding and dealing with boys' and girls' behaviour is to assist them in understanding that sex and gender are not the same:

> Everyday notions about gender are generally expressed in terms of difference. In our society at least, most of us know through nursery tales that 'boys just whistle and girls just sing', that boys don't cry (girls do) . . . Young children also understand gender as difference, as expressed in the common playground chant: 'Boys are strong, like King Kong, Girls are weak, chuck 'em in the creek' . . . 'Be a boy' is understood as 'Don't be a girl'. In short, gender is cast in our everyday language as dualisms or binarisms that are celebrated from childhood.

> (N. Alloway, 1995, pp.45 and 46)

This view that gender is a social construction supports the understanding that we as social beings actively take part in constructing our own gender identity:

> We each have our personal gender projects, trying to feel OK about ourselves in relation to the (sex) we were given at birth. . . . we (ie society) insist at birth that babies are labelled (and) . . . what is labelled as masculine by definition cannot also be feminine.

> (C. Collins et al, 1996, p.8)

We are not alone in constructing gender identity — other people, institutions and structures also pervasively add to the process. However, the ways that we show who we are, how we perform or 'do' gender will vary depending on our social, cultural and historical circumstances as well as our own understanding of what it means to be female or male in our society.

> Is doing geography going to be labelled masculine or feminine? Is playing the trumpet still safely masculine or are all musical instruments now feminine?

> (C. Collins, 1997, p.8)

Schools are powerful social and cultural institutions in constructing gender identity as they have a major influence on girls and boys and how they see themselves and each other. The formal and informal curriculums employed in schools shape children's understandings about gender and the performance of gendered identity.

> . . . gender is a pattern of social relations that exists at multiple levels in and around schools: in institutional patterns, in interpersonal relations and in culture. Gender relations divide, positioning people and actions as masculine and feminine . . . Gender relations are constantly under construction, contain significant tensions, and therefore have many possibilities of change.

> (R. W. Connell, 1994, p.8)

Every day attitudes and beliefs about gender are brought to the classroom and influence what is taught and how it is taught. Nothing is neutral. Teachers take part, with students, in constructing gender in daily interactions and relationships.

Why is the construction of gender so significant?

The reason that the theory of the construction of gender is considered to be so significant is because of the possibilities of change that this idea offers. The theory supports educators, children and students to be optimistic and hopeful about addressing and changing the anti-social and violent behaviours that occur in schools and so impact on issues like subject choices and academic outcomes.

This recognition that change is possible is clearly inconsistent with the idea that girls and boys have fixed patterns of behaviour. For example, the sort of accepted wisdom that gives rise to statements such as 'Oh you know, boys will be boys' or 'All girls are bitchy'.

Therefore the benefit of understanding gender as a construct is that it makes it possible to see the different ways identity is expressed and changes according to place and time and other factors such as race and class. Identity is unfixed and fluid.

Experiences from the project schools

Primary educators in one of the project schools planned and implemented a series of lessons about paid and unpaid work based on examining how gender shapes personal and public relationships.

During the process the educators were able to identify the different ways the students played out their gender identity in their everyday life.

All students were asked to keep a fictional diary for a week about the types of domestic work that their sex carried out. For example, a male student who often appeared hostile and disengaged at school demonstrated his knowledge that boy could exhibit cooperation and care at home. His diary contained detailed notes about how a boy shopped for his family and cooked meals on a daily basis. Armed with this broader understanding of what the boy could tell in his story the educators were able to build on these hopeful images of 'doing' masculinity.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Behaviour management policies and strategies have, as their prime rationale, the creation of safe, supportive learning environments, compliance with anti-discrimination legislative requirements and the achievement of successful student learning outcomes, social and academic.

Behaviour management can be more often about the management of misbehaviour than about the development of positive values, engagement in learning and improved relationships for a just and civil classroom. For this reason behaviour

management is often viewed as something additional to, or separate from, curriculum. This view was supported by an audit of behaviour management resources (including programs on bullying) in the project schools' resource collections which revealed that most texts had a behaviourist approach and a focus on the individual with little account being given to gender construction. This was reflected in the experiences of the project teachers.

> Most behaviour management approaches treat anti-social and violent behaviours as isolated incidents, as though they are not part of a continuum of behaviours which legitimise violence more generally.
>
> (Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1997, p 42)

In a culture where there is a focus on individual behaviours, our capacity to review the impact of social forces on groups is limited. Greater possibilities for analysis and action occur when individual behaviours are viewed as shaped by diverse social constructions such as gender, socio-economic status and school culture enacted in the relations between student, educator and school. Where analysis from a range of perspectives is carried out, it is evident that boys as a group are taking on the limiting role of resistant masculinity by pushing the behavioural limits and earning peer credit though their acting out.

> Research shows that boys are nearly twice as likely to dominate teacher attention in primary and secondary schools and three times more likely to be the pupils to whom teachers pay most attention. These figures suggest a high level of difficulty for Year 6 and Year 10 teachers in getting productive work out of either sex. But the problem

in relation to boys is clearly much more acute at both levels, and the implied proportion of girls at both levels trying to work is correspondingly larger.

> (C. Collins et al, 1996, p.64)

Experiences from the project schools

The project educators understood that approaches to behaviour management need to be based on an understanding of gender constructions and power relations and how this translates into forms of violence between girl/girl, girl/boy, boy/boy, educator/student and students/educators.

Staff in the project found a number of ways of broadening the definition of violence in terms of gender and how it is inextricably linked with teaching and learning. This included examining data by race, class and sex; discussing issues at performance management meetings; promoting critical-friend relationships; planned sharing of curriculum ideas across levels of schooling; and keeping journals.

In the project schools the educators explicitly taught and modelled the behaviours they expected. They actively involved the students in negotiating, establishing and maintaining standards of behaviour and could identify overall improvement in the classroom as an enhanced learning environment necessary to improving the learning outcomes for all students.

Central to this, educators and students gained skills in critically examining their assumptions and beliefs about power, behaviour and relationships in the classroom through curriculum, teaching and learning.

Current issues

The following section describes three under-examined gender issues that have been highlighted in recent research into the link between poor behaviour and gender in schools and classrooms. They are: gender and violence (Ollis & Tomaszewski, 1993 and extended in Collins et al 1996); the social development of girls and boys (Ainley et al, 1998); and homophobia and discrimination against same-sex attracted students (Hillier et al, 1998).

Gender and violence

Defining violence is a major difficulty for schools. Some behaviour can be identified more easily as violent than can others. Violence can be understood as a continuum of experiences — physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, psychological and social — which involves relations of power and control.

> A school-based definition of violence needs to include a recognition of the impact of violence not only on the safety of the victim, but also on their rights and freedoms and recognise both the overt and hidden form of violence which routinely take place in the school grounds, on the sport field and in the classroom and corridors.
>
> (Ollis & Tomaszewski, 1993, p.4)

Social development of girls and boys

A nation-wide report published in 1998 describing the results of research into Australian students' social development revealed that:

> The strongest and most pervasive influences among student characteristics are associated with gender ... Boys and girls differ in the response to several of the measures of social development ... Girls regard issues concerned with relating to others, commitment to community well-being and adherence to rules and conventions as more important to them than do boys ... The conclusion to be drawn is that boys are less concerned with these aspects of social development than are girls and that the gap

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS, BY SEX

Percentage of students who often display the following behaviors
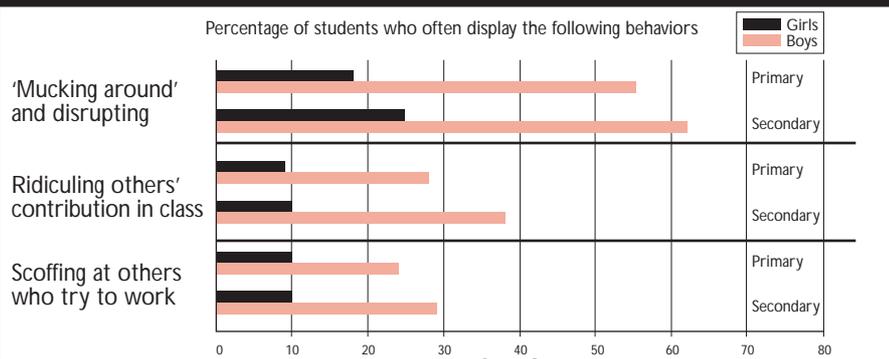
(Source: Collins, C.W., Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, (1996) *Gender and schools education*, Canberra AGPS, pg 64, fig 4.1)

widens between the late primary and middle secondary years (see table below) . . . Empathy may operate as a brake on aggressive behaviour . . . Much of the research into empathy has reported a consistent gender pattern, with girls showing higher levels of empathy than boys.

(Ainley et al, 1998, p xxvii)

SCHOOLS AND THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

Interaction of gender and year level on relating to others

(Ainley et al, 1998, p 42)

The data can be seen as a snapshot of what is happening in Australian schools at a certain point in time and needs to be read as not being fixed male and female behaviour patterns. Both girls and boys can get on well with others.

Experiences from the project schools

Educators in the project schools recognised the limitations of interpreting this research. As one educator said:

When I looked at the graph I thought how terrible it was that boys' ability to relate to others is so much worse than girls' but then I realised that the data on girls doesn't show that they have such great skills either. I talked to the others in the project and we agreed that we had to work with all girls and boys to help them develop empathy and relate well to others.

The findings from recent research on students views for preferred futures show that:

. . . there is a dichotomy in their preferred futures: many boys are
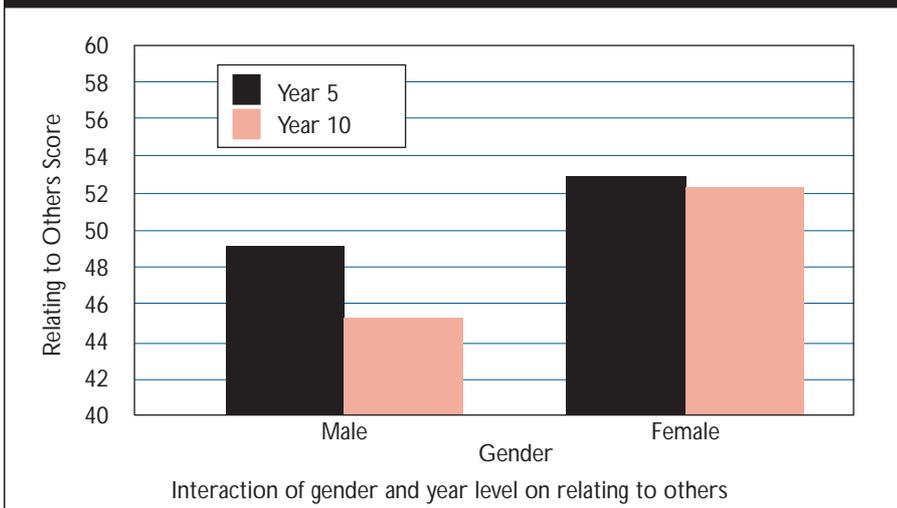
attracted by new technology and yet in discussion show that they are aware of its negative effects – many lay the blame for unemployment on new technology. Boys do want a more just and equitable society and many hope for greater environmental awareness but they accept a high tech future as inevitable and see it as an answer to all human problems. Girls, however are more sceptical of the value of such a future , putting greater emphasis on people and relationships and less on technology. This emphasis on good relationships seems healthy and has implications for the curriculum in terms of providing more time for discussion of personal issues and cooperative group work for both girls and boys. Clearly, however, girls do also need to be able to engage confidently with technology at all levels.

(Hicks 1995 pp. 106-7)

Homophobia

Homophobia has also become a major issue in student behaviour management and has been identified by principals, educators and students (Xpress Nos 6 & 7, 2000). It is well documented that harassment whether it is on grounds of race, sex, class, sexuality or perceived sexuality makes unsafe learning conditions and inhibits the quality of learning outcomes.

70% of young gay and lesbian people were harassed and abused at school – 60% of perpetrators were other students. This

means that school is a more violent place than for example, the streets for these young people. (Hillier et al 1998 p.33) Often, homophobic name-calling can be dismissed as meaningless. However, research shows its significant relationship to the construction of boys and girls identities and aggressive masculinity. (Hillier et al 1998, Epstein 2000) It can matter little to those doing the harassing whether their targets are homosexual or not, rather it can be a matter of demonstrating that they themselves are safely heterosexual. In the early years, homophobia operates in the sense of marking those boys and sometimes those girls who do not conform to gender expectations.

Stories young people told specifically linked drug use in part to alleviating painful feelings or experiences associated with their sexuality, and in some cases, to attempts at suicide. The levels of injecting drug use revealed by this group (same sex attracted students) were up to four times higher than results obtained from other Australian studies. This points to the need for more specific research, particularly with young women and rural young people, whose levels of injecting were significantly high.

(Hillier et al 1998, p.72)

Experiences from the project schools

Educators in the project became aware of the extent of homophobia directed mostly by boys towards other boys in their schools. Less often, girls were also the targets and girls too took part in labelling and using the language of bias against homosexuality. Educators recognised that much of the language of harassment and denigration is based around perceptions and reinforcement of gender and sexuality difference and inequality – a boy is 'a girl', 'a fag' or 'poofter'.

This is not necessarily based on confirmation of sexual preference (even in the secondary years) but more likely on prejudiced perceptions. The critical explanation of the role of language in the assumption that only heterosexuality is acceptable supported educators' broader focus on human rights and citizenship in a diverse society.

Research documents examples of male resistance to the subject English.

- Because girls express their feeling and educators favour girls. Also boys find English boring (Student)

- This subject is the biggest load of bullshit I have ever done. Therefore, I don't particularly like this subject. I hope you aren't offended by this, but most guys who like English are faggots (Student).

(Martino 1995 p.354)

The gender and diversity issues discussed here highlight the need to examine the school culture and terms like 'bullying' from a range of perspectives including those of different girls and boys.

CURRICULUM

The formal curriculum can be defined as that which a society sees as important at the time for all learners to know, understand, do and value and take with them as citizens post school. It's about what counts and can contribute to a more just society.

Curriculum has often been popularly defined as 'everything that goes on in a school'. Within this students are taught powerful lessons about the gendered sense of themselves and their relation with others through the structures, organisation and practices that characterise schooling.

They also engage with other lessons of class and race. This means that identity and behaviours are shaped by a myriad of factors including what goes on in the yard in break times, what popular cultural texts are the talk of the day and the selection of classroom texts and topics. Such dynamics occur in the intellectual and emotional engagement with learning and within policy and curriculum framework and guidelines.

For example, the new South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) framework with its key organising elements, the Essential Learnings (Futures, Identity, Interdependence, Thinking, Communication) is based on constructivist learning theories. These provide opportunities to extend curriculum justice and improve social and academic learning outcomes for all students as described in the following example.

Experiences from the project schools

One participant in the project talked about how curriculum, learning outcomes, gender and behaviour management are linked and clearly points out that this is not about one-off programs:

'Behaviour management, curriculum and gender are related in three ways. Firstly if you engage girls and boys in the curriculum they learn you have to make it relevant to their needs. Secondly, you also have to deal with behaviour and students' relationships within the curriculum. This means addressing issues like sexual and racial harassment and homophobia not only through studies of society and environment, health and physical education but also through English and mathematics. Finally we have to remember that new behaviours can be learned. It is our responsibility to be persistent in teaching new behaviours. It is unrealistic to expect that one learning or behaviour plan will simply solve all problems.'

FIVE STEPS SCHOOLS CAN TAKE TOWARDS DEVELOPING A NON-VIOLENT SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Based on the model prepared by Professor Connell (*Developing school-based, research-informed responses to issues about boys and masculinities*) there are five steps schools can take to address and link gender, behaviour management and curriculum:

1. **Examine the situation**

2. **Extend the common ground**

3. **Make gender a theme across the curriculum**

4. **Design special purpose initiatives**

5. **Take time for evaluation**

While these are set out below as discrete areas of action, in practice there are considerable interconnections.

1. Examine the situation

Examining the situation involves the collection by sex and analysis by gender of a range of data. While gender is obviously not the only factor, it is the one that needs to be examined to see what's going on in being a girl or being a boy at school.

Students can be drawn in as co-researchers with the educators on this topic by pointing out to them that this will help them develop skills in studying and reflecting on an important area of their own lives. The data, which can be collected at sites, will include information about:

- gender relations, in other words, the ways girls and boys get on together and with educators and others in the school community

Experiences from the project schools

At one project primary school, staff collected information about the different ways boys were able to demonstrate masculinity at the school. Both staff and parents had been concerned about the levels of homophobic harassment, for example some boys who didn't take part in the mainstream sports and some who were physically smaller were being subjected to taunts of 'gay', 'poofter', 'girlie'.

The chairperson of the school council and principal met to formulate a process by which they could share their concerns with the council members and thus address the discrimination.

- changes in the relations and expectations between women and men in new arrangements of work and home

Experiences from the project schools

One class in a project school researched the paid and unpaid work of people in their local community and identified a number of changes in what women did and what men did. This led to discussion about possible futures for adult males and females.

- masculinity 'hot-spots', that is, situations or activities where issues about masculinity are particularly prominent or troubled (sport, homophobia, student welfare)

A junior primary educator provided children with an enlarged map of the yard and pairs of children took turns in observing particular parts of the playground such as the play equipment and grassed play areas. On their maps they noted where girls and boys played separately and where they played together. They also noted masculinity 'hot-spots', which were located mainly on the grassed play areas. One issue that emerged was that some boys commonly referred to the grassed play areas as the soccer oval. These were no-go areas for girls and younger children. They were dominated by a group of boys who were often engaged in play fighting, rough play, violence, and name-calling.

- subject choices, participation in curriculum

In one project school an examination of subject choices and participation showed boys' reluctance in language classes. Further investigation then took place with the setting up of a single sex class to research the best methodologies to support boys in language learning. This involved using the work of P. Gilbert and N. Alloway (*Boys and literacy: professional development and teaching units*). This approach involved the educators expecting boys to be literacy learners and drew on the interests of the boys to promote their learning. At the same time the skills of critical thinking and futures perspectives were taught.

- in a small sample of the schools, including both the affluent and disadvantaged, where boys were doing as well as girls, there were common key features:

  - consistently held expectations that boys as well as girls required the skills and understandings to be literate in all learning areas.

  - the firm belief that boys could learn that masculinity need not be at odds with being an engaged and successful school literacy learner.

- targeted and explicit teaching of literacy skills

- making links with home and community knowledge

- listening to what boys and girls have to say

- educators undertaking ongoing professional development and focusing on the complexities of learners' experiences and the influence this has on learning

At a secondary project school parents expressed concerns about gang behaviour. Members of this gang were targeting other boys who were perceived as 'different', in particular, boys in the special education class.
In order to expand this understanding of behaviour, staff members used workshops for parents and caregivers on the topic of gender, violence and curriculum content. The *No fear kit* supported this investigation with examples of units of work (for example on verbal harassment, name-calling) and strategies for teaching. The teachers also drew on the *Ideas into practice* article on civics and citizenship (1999) which promoted that teaching practices and classroom community and relationships are as important as the curriculum content.

- curriculum content and delivery

In a junior primary setting school staff and students examined the kinds language that could be used to describe success in learning. They made a chart of terms that could be used to extend understandings of success to include diverse community knowledge and not limiting possibilities by gender.

- assessment and competition and how school defines success and failure.

2. **Extend the common ground**

Segregation in social life normally makes communication difficult and sustains inequalities. Steps can be taken in the school to end gender oppositions and

divisions, and encourage high quality cross-gender communication, in for example:

- extra-curricular activities such as drama, community and committee work

- technologies such as computing and textiles

- physical education

- the use of resources (for example single sex classes sharing the same resources and information).

Extending the common ground means more than the formal integration of activities. For example in physical education simply merging boys' classes and girls' classes in an area that is a traditional area for dominating masculinities, will be counterproductive unless the activity itself is re-designed.

One project school provided opportunities for girls and boys to work together to examine the construction of gender through physical activity and sport. They measured the status of male and female sport through looking at newspapers, TV clips and radio using statistical and language analysis. In another unit of work about the Sydney Olympics students critically assessed the messages that the mascots, Olly, Syd and Millie give. For example, Millie the echidna is an optimist and believes a more peaceful world can be built through sport. Students discussed this proposition and looked at how their school's physical education program promotes good gender and race relations and therefore a more peaceful world. This led to lively open discussions about the constraints of gender stereotypes. This set the scene for students to discuss how things could be better in the future.

Extending the common ground can also take place initially in single sex settings and extended into coeducational settings by challenging gender-based violence and lack of respect between the sexes.

How often have you heard the words of cynical realism such as 'Your idea for a gender-equity and peer-mediation programme is quite an interesting one but you will find

yourself swimming against the tide'?… How might we start to gather our resources for a journey of hope? In educating for the twenty-first century are there important challenges to be taken up, not only for our own generation but on behalf of future generations, to negotiate improvements in skills of imagination, social inventiveness and prudent foresight?

(Hutchinson 1996, p.3)

Experiences from the project schools

One of the project schools used single sex classes in computing lessons and constantly supported the notion that both girls and boys can be competent computer users. For example, both the boys' and girls' classes investigated the male bias in computer programs and advertising, identified the impact of the material and what could change for the good of both sexes in a preferred fair future.

3. Make gender a theme across the curriculum

This is partly a matter of seeing and rethinking what is already there in the English literature curriculum, or the mathematics and science curriculums or indeed any of the learning areas. In fact it is a matter of making gender relations consistently an object of study across the curriculum with the ultimate aim of better academic and social outcomes. These topics are, of course, already a keen interest of most children and adolescents.

In making gender relations a topic of study there is a danger that these issues might not be seen as part of 'real learning' (because they are not a subject that some people readily recognise, such as geography). In most situations it is therefore not advisable to develop a separate gender studies unit.

For gender issues to become a normal part of the curriculum it is especially important for those boys whose own model of masculinity resists reflection on gender to participate. Some subjects such as health and physical education, society and environment, arts and English may appear at first sight to lend themselves better to gender studies. In fact, it is often in subjects where it is not so easy to see the

applicability of gender studies that it is most needed, for example mathematics and science. This will be supported through the articulation of the Essential Learnings and Equity Cross Curriculum Perspectives in learning outcomes.

Experiences from the project schools

By adopting a socially critical perspective in the various curriculums, educators are able to explore concepts such as gender stereotypes. For example, in an integrated mathematics and science unit of work for an upper primary class in one of the project schools, students examined the need for domestic work in a space shuttle and the question of who does the caring and cleaning.

They also investigated other issues for life in a space shuttle, for example, menstruation. These topics provided the vehicle for teaching about respect for both sexes and recognition of their common humanity as well as optimism about gender diversity.

There are particular ideas and values that require teaching and learning in a democratic and pluralistic social. These include the notions of identity, high-quality relations with others, interdependence, communication and future perspectives.

Experiences from the project schools

In a health and physical education unit on identity students explored the concept of the norm and the other, for example in relation to male/female, heterosexuality/homosexuality; white/ black.

They discussed and deconstructed the binary opposites that they could see reinforced the idea that some groups in society were entitled to more rights than others. Another way to put it was that some groups were defined as 'normal', which gave them power over others and the ability to restrict possibilities for others.

By the end of the unit of work research undertaken by the students showed that their perceptions of diversity and

respect for difference had increased. This was especially so in classroom situations where thought-provoking classroom discussions became part of the culture and where students had learned to be active and respectful speakers and listeners with an ability to see and value a range of views and a range of ways of being female and male.

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Group work and round table discussions brought forward information that the girls didn't always know how to cooperate with each other, and didn't think mathematics was very important for them and certainly not for the girls with disabilities. In addressing these issues students interviewed older men and women about their mathematics experiences and then drew up future scenarios for diverse groups of girls that included using mathematics learning. This enabled the educator to report on improved mathematics and social learning outcomes of quality relationships with others.

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Educators used the teaching resources *Discovering democracy* (Curriculum Corporation, 1998), *Civics and citizenship: we will take part and The ABC of becoming a critically literate citizen* (S. Dally, 1998) to plan, program and implement a unit of work around the topics of empathy, respect and diversity. In a series of integrated society and environment and English lessons in a middle school setting student safety was ensured by the use of two teaching techniques. These involved developing classroom rules and using protective interrupting to ensure against any unsafe disclosures. Using these techniques meant that all students felt confident to express themselves without intimidation and were able to introduce discussions about particular values and topics without having to explain themselves.

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Resources used included the video 'Getting Even' (Film Australia, 1994), which looks at the gender behaviours and relations on show in question time in the House in Federal Parliament and also TV clips of 'The Simpsons'.

The range of methodologies employed included single-sex and mixed-sex groups, group discussion and the use of critical and open questioning and future perspectives. Educators were explicit with students about their beliefs that neither girls nor boys are naturally good or bad at relating. Students in their classes were helped to explore ethics and values, and to undertake research into the gender constraints operating in their classroom and school. They worked towards achieving the outcome that both girls and boys can learn to be respectful and relate well to others.

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Another project school in a design and technology unit used the video 'Rights From the Heart' (1995) to support teaching and learning about systems of gender and harassment in the yard and how it can be dealt with and changed in an open and direct way. In the unit girls and boys were able to explore issues of gender and power relations as a system of human making. Students designed a code of practice for relations that covered respectful ways of relating and strategies to address harassment. The students took their research, plans and concerns to the SRC. This led to school-wide research about yard play, and subsequently a playtime roster that enabled groups of children from a range of year levels to have regular access to the oval with a longer term view of all getting together.

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In media studies using Nintendo 64 magazines students in upper primary classes studied the issues of gender, power and violence. They discussed how images might shape the everyday behaviours in school. This led to the following critical questions:

- What would it take to make a stand against friends who are using violence? What support is needed from others to do this?

- What does it take to make a stand against violence? What attributes/qualities would it take? Would it be difficult?

- What would it require to acknowledge, and do something about, unfair behaviours?

(Adapted from *No fear:* DEET, 1995).

Some examples of similar questions on gender and power relations for junior primary students are set out in *Girls and boys come out to play* (Dally & Lindstrom, 1996, pp 106-110).

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In a Year 9 science class the educator was concerned about girls' participation. He used a video camera to record a series of mixed-sex science lessons. He had thought girls and boys were working cooperatively, however what the video showed was that in each lesson girls were concentrating more on the needs of boys by supplying them with materials, offering suggestions and helping them by collecting resources, equipment and recording information.

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Using the video as the basis for critical viewing/literacy research he asked students to focus on and note what the boys were doing and what the girls were doing. Students then had an opportunity to work in single-sex groups and respond to critical questions such as: Who was working? What sort of work were girls doing? What sort of work were boys doing? Whose learning was being supported? Whose learning needs were being met? Students and the educators shared their responses as a whole class and discussed issues such as the responsibility the educator had for ensuring learning outcomes were achieved for all students. Together, he and the students worked together to plan a series of lessons about space travel. The educator gave his students opportunities to work together in single-sex and mixed groups. In order to ensure that each student took responsibility for their own learning the educator used the 'Guide to research and investigation' found in *Home and away in space* (Mather 1999). These curriculum materials provide a model for examining gender issues as part of the science learning.

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Other educators in the project enabled students to see mathematics as both academic and social practice and as an avenue to explore gender by involving them in sample surveys and giving them opportunities to become statistically literate. For example students researched:

- girls' and boys' safety in the toilets. The upper primary students

developed tables and graphs as a means of displaying their data

- data about participation by men and women in sport; in the media industry; and the amount of space given to articles about women and men in local newspapers. They then wrote to the newspaper editors asking about their editorial policy with regard to fair representation for both sexes and invited a journalist from one of the local newspapers to an interview with their class.

In an integrated unit of work an English teacher and a language (Spanish) teacher examined gender constructions through sport and the arts, for example, bull-fighting, soccer, visual arts and music (Cereceda & Richards, 1998).

4. Design special purpose initiatives

If specific problems and 'hot-spots' have been identified (step 1) there is a place for special purpose programs based on masculinity issues such as reading difficulties, communication difficulties, and managing anger in single sex groups. These programs are usually short term and arise because of the impact of gender construction, for example boys' avoidance of school reading and their over reliance on aggression and control over others.

These programs are not necessarily targeted only at boys. For instance initiatives on sexual harassment, homophobia or other forms of bullying should include girls as well as boys. Both boys and girls need to study issues about gender, including issues about masculinity and how the prevailing version of masculinity can dominate the ways boys and girls enact their gender identity.

Experiences from the project schools

Girls in a primary school class examined the portrayal of females and their relations with males in the electronic game magazines, for example, play stations. They followed on by writing to a State Youth Forum to voice their concerns and suggest positive alternative images. The letter was also published in the school newsletter and emailed to the publishing company.

5. Take time for evaluation

This means periodically returning to step 1 and examining the situation by looking at the data the school already produces (eg on disciplinary action, behaviour and learning support, retention rates, participation in activities, subject choice, conditions of learning), social and academic outcomes (eg on curriculum standards, literacy and numeracy tests and SACE) and listening carefully to feedback from the school's community.

This does not mean sending out questionnaires, which, unless professionally crafted, produce low-grade information. Project schools did however adapt the questionnaires that were the basis of the national sample survey *Gender and school education* report to support their evaluation. (C. Collins et al, 1996, Appendix, p 185)

Experiences from the project schools

One project school educator noted that:
The most effective way to raise gender issues is through data and research. Keeping statistics can become part of backing up what's going on. Student behaviour management is critical. If you are doing it and doing it properly you will collect data. Through the data, gender issues will emerge and can emerge.

Following student research about student relationships and safety and the poor conditions in toilets a Reception to year 2 class and a year 3-4 class in one project school took their findings to the SRC. A submission was sent to the principal detailing the recommendations for improved toilet safety and privacy.

Reception — Year 2 research

This initiative led to the toilets being painted and locks being put on the toilet doors. In addition, a 'Toilet Watch' monitoring group was set up to collect data about harassment and student safety and to address instances of harassment and violence, in and around both girls' and boys' toilets. This became a joint educator and student project across the school.

In two other project schools:

- students, who had investigated library borrowing by girls and boys, analysed data on student subject choice and wrote reports about their findings

- students analysed the language use and the images in the school newsletters for bias. They then made suggestions for changes to the school council via the SRC.

Always bear in mind that gender relations are complex and deeply entrenched and it is unlikely that large changes will be produced quickly. Yet it is also important to remember that gender patterns do change, and schools can and do have an impact.

LEADERSHIP

Leaders recognise that the teaching of futures perspectives is crucial to the curriculum because it allows learners to critically and creatively envisage futures that are less marked by violence in gender relations, are more optimistic about diversity, learning and post school options.

…as gender is such a feature of our lives and because an understanding of gender offers useful insights into educational issues and problems, it seemed to us that theories of educational change should not remain gender blind . . . most educational change efforts are directed to teachers and principals as professionals or to students as students. In contrast, gender reform works on their gender identity as well.

(Kenway, 1997, p xviii)

The most up to date research on gender factors influencing educational performance and outcomes illustrates that there are major differences in education participation, performance and outcomes. However it also shows that these do not necessarily translate onto disadvantage in straight forward ways. Research indicates that differences in performance need to be examined according to differences both between and within gender groups.

There are priorities to be addressed in order to improve participation and performance, for example:

- Intolerance, harassment and violence; socio-economic status, gender and cultural bias; and unwelcoming environment in which students and their families are not valued. (Collins, Kenway & Mcleod 2000, p.2 and p.5)

Experiences from the project schools

Interviews with participants in the project pointed out the importance of leadership in trying to link curriculum, behaviour management and gender.

One principal stated:
The role of the leader is to set the vision for teaching and learning; to set the vision for the curriculum. It is important that staff recognise the complexity of the issues about gender, its links with behaviour management and how the area can be addressed through curriculum.

The ways in which principals and school leaders supported staff to link behaviour management, curriculum and gender varied, depending on the school.

For example:

- One school used regular, focused training and development, particularly on gender equity and how it looks in the school. Professional discussion starters included:

  'Schools and centres should be places in which girls and boys feel safe, are safe, and where they are respected and valued' (*Gender equity: a framework for Australian schools*, Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1996, p.15)

  'What we teach, and how we teach it, presents girls and boys with constant messages about what it is to be male and female, and it can be argued that this works to the detriment of both boys and girls. What is more, the curriculum fails to provide girls and boys with the skills they need to see those messages.' (S. Cameron, *What's going on? Girls and boys in Australian schools*,1995, p.27)

Groups of educators meeting to plan and program units of work that explicitly assisted girls and boys to develop knowledge, skills, behaviours, attitudes and understandings that would enable them to construct equal and respectful relationships. For example:

- The representation of teenage girls and boys through a) daily newspapers b) youth magazines c) computer games with a focus on the role for language (middle years).
- Girls and boys: work, leisure and pleasure in the future (primary years).

Human resource management provided an opportunity to attract and appoint staff with knowledge about the issues.

Performance management was also an issue explored by the leadership.

One school leader said:
'I use performance management meetings as an opportunity to talk with educators about their goals — their overall goals for the school but also their personal and professional goals and the support they need to achieve them. Many educators may want to achieve change in the area of gender equity but they don't have the language or the knowledge, so you can use performance management meetings as an opportunity to start up a dialogue. And going on from there, you can better meet the training and development needs of your staff.'

Dealing with resistance

The *No Fear* materials clearly describe the importance of dealing with resistance:

Taking action to address issues of gender based violence can be met with resistance. Resistance is always an aspect of change but should not stand in the way of working to improve the school environment. Understanding the nature of the arguments against taking action is the first step in working with others to develop understandings of the complexity of these issues.

(*No Fear facilitators' guide*, pp 16 and 17)

Experiences from the project schools

Educators in a Year 5/6 collaborative teaching unit negotiated expectations of work and behaviour with students. They used a class meeting format as a means of doing this. Some boys became angry and defiant at having to 'do the rules again'. They showed their resistance through body language, folding their arms across their chests, moving away from the group and turning their backs on it.

The educators calmly and respectfully engaged students in a discussion about the rules and their responses to the disruptive behaviour. In doing this they modelled a process that students could use to explore, analyse and express their own feelings about disruption and conflict. Educators then worked with students to help them to understand features of dominant masculinity and how these can impact negatively on their own learning and that of others. For example, boys who overtly defy authority may well see the need to increase resistance to maintain their masculine identity and even further take them away form effective learning participation.

SUGGESTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Educators and their schools involved in the project generated many more questions as they engaged with the issues. One of the central concerns was that of educators' sense of gender identity and their relations with their students. This had complex implications for teaching the skills and understandings about gender and behaviours in the way that other skills and understandings are taught and learned. The following questions are a useful starting point for school leaders:

- How will staff be involved in examining their own behaviours and practices in relation to their participation in constructing masculinity as naturally more aggressive or violent?

  — What kind of assumptions are held about the behaviours of girls and boys in poverty, Aboriginal girls and boys, girls and boys with disabilities, and girls and boys from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

  — Compare these with assumptions made about white middle class girls' and boys' behaviours.

- What kinds of language operates in staffrooms, classrooms and in the yard to describe behaviours of different groups of girls and boys. How does the use of language contribute to the kinds of expectations held about students and their learning outcomes?

- How is the term 'behaviour management' defined at their site? 'Behaviour management' can imply undemocratic processes of top down management of student behaviour without actively working with the views of the diverse student population (diverse in terms of age, gender, socio-economic status, culture, location,

abilities). The voices of the students can be an integral part of behaviour management policies and practices and the term can be about self and peer behaviour management with high support and high expectations of the adult population at the school or centre.

Experiences from the project schools

The educators in the project schools also dealt with the questions: Where do we go from here? What else are we looking at?

Some of these questions follow:

*   Look at the girls. What kinds of behaviours and attitudes are they displaying that is, how are they expressing their femininity?

    What is being said about girls and groups of girls in the school, for example:

    — their academic progress

    — their relations with other girls and boys?

*   Where are the opportunities at events (for example assemblies) for the boys as well as girls to demonstrate their social learning?

*   How do boys' behaviours and attitudes impact on the participation of girls and other boys in schools?

*   Are there explicit opportunities to examine the role of language that is, literacy, in all learning areas to challenge the idea that girls' and boys' behaviours are opposite and unequal?

*   How will any program, initiative or behaviour management strategy improve the learning environment and outcomes of all students?

*   How many opportunities are there for both boys and girls to voice their ideas and experiences?

*   How are the connections made between addressing gender and violence issues and programs such as protective behaviours, peer mediation and collaborative classrooms?

CONCLUSION

What does a school addressing gender, behaviour management and curriculum look like?

One of the goals of public education is that all learners gain the knowledge, skills, understandings and values that enable them to attain social and economic achievements in non violent and rewarding ways.

This entails good relations with others, respect for their community (local and global) and diversity, and sharing in the shaping of a fair and just society for each and all.

This may mean being involved in struggles against injustice and the defence of human rights and responsibilities.

Tackling behaviour management issues in curriculum and learning contributes to learning about the possibilities of high-quality gender identities and interdependence. The possibilities are there then for high quality learning

A major research project on violence in schools *Sticks and stones* (1994) envisages a more hopeful and just future:

> These schools are developing a whole school approach to addressing school violence. These schools ensure that students are aware of their rights. Importantly, however, emphasis is placed on students' responsibilities to themselves and others. Rules are applied consistently and fairly and have clearly stated consequently for positive and negative behaviours.

> The rules are developed jointly between parents, educators and the students to create a sense of ownership. Appropriate behaviour is taught, not as a separate curriculum item, but as an integral part of the teaching process. Educators are responsible for the pastoral care of students in their class, irrespective of the subjects that they teach.

> (*Sticks and stones*, March, 1994, p v)

Endnote

For more information about the construction of gender refer to the paper: 'Understanding the process of the construction of gender' in *Gender equity: a framework for Australian schools* (Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1996, pp 25-30)

For more information on gender issues and their link to poor behaviour refer to the 'School Discipline Policy' and supplementary papers, and the supplementary paper 'Violence and school culture' in *Gender equity: a framework for Australian schools* (Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1997, pp 40-47)

For more information about the relationship between curriculum, behaviour management and gender refer to the supplementary paper on *Curriculum, teaching and learning in Gender equity: a framework for Australian schools* (Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1996, pp 31-39.

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