Mind the Gap: Tackling Gender-related violence in theory and practice in developing training for youth practitioners.

Fin Cullen
Brunel University London, London, Uk

This paper is based on the 2 year EU funded international GAP WORK project to support training for youth practitioners to combat Gender-related violence. The project sought bridge potential gaps in practice between:

- support services for adults and for children;
- specialist victim-support services and everyday professional contact;
- supporting those affected and intervening to challenge violence;
- actions focussed on dating violence or on homophobia.

Hence, a broad definition of ‘gender-related violence' (GRV) was adopted which aimed to problematise sexist, sexualising or norm-driven bullying and harassment whichever children and young people are targeted.

This presentation will explore the UK arm of the project- which involved designing, delivering and evaluating such training with 128 participants. The initial focus was explicitly feminist and was grounded in the team's experiences as academics, practitioners and activists. In this paper I examine the opportunities and challenges offered by critically engaging with, and opening up definitions of gender based violence using the experiences drawn from interview data- from both trainers and training participants. I explore the potential within youth work and schooling to challenge normative sex-gender (Batsleer, 2006, 2012; No Outsiders, 2009). The paper reflects on the challenges of bringing activism, practice and theory together, as well as on prior scholarly work on critical and feminist pedagogy (Weiler, 1991; Morley, 1998).

The paper examines the key challenges that emerged for participants and trainers in considering how to translate and operationalize this work into practice. I argue that by engaging with such critical tensions provides a forum to consider how we might draw on feminist and queer theory in a legible way for practitioners- and provide insights into new directions for future research and practice in developing gender and sexualities equalities training for practitioners in schools and youth settings.

References:


