

## We must stop indoctrinating boys in feminist ideology

Feminist organisations, backed by government policy, are teaching young boys at school to feel guilty and ashamed of their gender, writes Dan Bell



Since when did we teach ideology to children? Photo: Alamy

By Dan Bell

10:26AM BST 20 Jul 2015

On Wednesday, the Daily Mail reported that a school in Oxford has become the first to introduce “Good Lad” workshops, in which boys are singled out for sessions that teach them about “the scale of sexual harassment and violence aimed at female students” and how they must stand up for women's rights.

The workshops are the latest in a mushrooming series of initiatives in which ideologically-driven activists are being invited into schools, driven by the belief that boys need to be re-educated to prevent them from becoming a threat to women.

In November last year, The Times reported on a programme in London Schools in which two American women, one a former sex crime prosecutor, “re-programme teenage boys’ sexual manners so they are fit for a feminist world”.

According to the report, they start the class by asserting that “misogyny is on the rise”, before going on to “describe real-life sex crimes that have happened to teenagers in this area with brutal accuracy”. The

article concludes – approvingly -- that by the end of the session, the boys are “scarred for life”.

In context of the chasm between boys’ and girls’ educational attainment and a rising male suicide rate that is now nearly four times that of women’s, why are schools deciding that when it comes to talking about gender, what boys need most is an extra dose of guilt and shame?

Another organisation, A Call to Men UK, also goes into schools, stating on its website: “A CALL TO MEN UK believes that preventing violence against women and girls is primarily the responsibility of men. We re-educate through trainings (sic), workshops, presentations, school projects and community initiatives.”

### *Since when was it acceptable to impose ideology on school children?*

Dan Bell

And yet another, the Great Men Value Women project, frames its mission as about helping young men, but it’s also driven by the belief that young men need to be re-educated as feminists – not just for their own good, but for women’s too. On the section of their website listing the organisation’s values, their final point

simply states: “Feminism: This says it all”, with a link to a video of TED X talk entitled: “We Should All Be Feminists”.

Really? Who says so? Most importantly though, since when was it acceptable to impose ideology on school children? And for that matter, would we ever dare to suggest school girls ought to be taught that Great Women Value Men?

By all means, let’s teach children about healthy relationships, but that’s not really what these campaigns are about. Instead there is an overwhelming emphasis on imposing an ideological worldview that first and foremost sees young men as potential abusers and perpetrators, while routinely ignoring and minimising the very real threat of violence, both physical and sexual, that boys and young men face themselves.

- When men talk about feminism, it brings out the worst of Twitter

You’d never know it from the rhetoric, but a man – and particularly a young man -- is around twice as likely to be a victim of violent crime as a woman. And it’s not just drunken street violence either. A 2009 NSPCC report into domestic violence in teenage relationships, showed teenage boys suffer comparable rates of violence from their girlfriends as do teenage girls from their boyfriends.

In the same year another report, this time by Childline, found that of the children who called to report sexual abuse, a total of 8,457 were girls (64pc) and 4,780 were boys (36pc). The charity also found boys

were more likely to say they had been sexually abused by a woman (1,722 cases) than by a man (1,651).

At the time, Childline founder Esther Rantzen, said the charity had specifically reached out to boys, because they were convinced the higher number of calls they had been receiving from girls “could not be explained by the fact that boys encountered fewer problems than girls”.

Imagine what it must be like as a young man who has been beaten or sexually abused, possibly by a woman, to then be forced to attend a workshop that tells him that simply because he’s a young man, he should hang his head in shame as a potential abuser?

Neither are these activist interventions just the preserve of a few radical head teachers: they in fact reflect official government policy.

In March, the Government announced the introduction of new consent classes for children aged as young as 11. The plans were launched on International Women’s Day and the PSHE guidelines repeatedly state they are primarily part of the Government’s A Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls strategy.

According to a “Fact Sheet” published by one of the guidelines’ key contributors, a top priority for the lessons is “challenging notions of male sexual entitlement” and the lessons should be seen “in the context of a society in which gender inequality is the norm... and girls and young women are subjected to high levels of harassment, abuse and violence - overwhelmingly from men and boys they know”.

Apparently, in the eyes of the government, schoolboys don’t so much see girls as their friends and peers, but as potential prey.

- Meet the feminist who is sticking up for men

And the indoctrination doesn’t stop when a boy leaves school, it continues when he gets to university too – the “Good Lad” workshops in Oxford, are in fact a spin-off from compulsory consent classes for new male students that are now springing up across UK universities.

What impact must all this be having on boys and young men, who are themselves at one of the most vulnerable stages of their lives? Last year, insideMAN published findings of a focus group of young male students, which gave a disturbing glimpse into the ideological classroom climate faced by boys, this time told by young men themselves.

They told us that when it came to expressing any view that contradicted feminist orthodoxy, they were shouted at and publicly humiliated. They said their motives routinely came under immediate suspicion simply on account of their gender. And they said they wanted to be protected against fundamentalism by prominent and leading figures in the campaign for gender equality.

If boys like these are already coming under attack in A Level English classes, what might they expect in a PSHE lesson that – as one of the new suggested lesson plans propose -- puts them through a “conscience alley”, in which they are asked to take on the role of a potential rapist, then walk between their classmates who tell them what they think of their behaviour?

- Can a man ever truly call himself a feminist?

In 2001, novelist and feminist icon Doris Lessing made a shocking assessment of what she had seen while visiting a school classroom.

She told the Edinburgh Book Festival, "I was in a class of nine- and 10-year-olds, girls and boys, and this young woman was telling these kids that the reason for wars was the innately violent nature of men.

"You could see the little girls, fat with complacency and conceit while the little boys sat there crumpled, apologising for their existence, thinking this was going to be the pattern of their lives."

Lessing expressed deep concern that what she had witnessed was just a glimpse of an increasingly pervasive culture of toxic feminism in schools that was weighing down boys with a collective sense of guilt and shame.

She had every right to be worried. It seems there is now a drive to make shame and guilt a formal part of boys' education.

***Dan Bell is the Features Editor at insideMAN magazine***

- ***Read Great Men's response: We are teaching boys to feel empowered, not ashamed***

How we moderate

© Copyright of Telegraph Media Group Limited 2017