

Taking Boys Seriously

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Centre for Young Men's Studies**

**Yresearch conference
YMCA
George Williams College
London
6th February 2015**

Issues we will address today:

- Who we are
- The Problem
- Findings from 'Taking Boys Seriously' longitudinal study
- A Youth Work Methodology (Valuing what youth workers do)
- Dissemination Strategy
- Outcomes from research

- A 'Balanced Approach' to working with young people (Understanding what youth workers do)

Taking Boys Seriously DVD

The Problem: An investigation into

- Boys academic underachievement and,
- Wider concerns about boys health and well-being

- The specific objectives of the research were to increase our understanding of:
 - Factors that may contribute to male **academic underachievement** and finding **practical ways** to address this
 - **The value of education** and how school can become a more positive learning experience
 - **Non-formal** educational approaches
 - **Transitions** through adolescence
 - How experiences of **violence in a post-conflict society** impact upon education and learning

 - **Funded by The Departments of Education & Justice and supported by an Advisory Committee**

We therefore utilised:

a methodology that focussed not only on boys' educational experiences, but also on their social, psychological, physical and emotional well-being

an approach where the **voice of boys** was central to the process

a **youth work** methodology

Including previously tested scientific questionnaires for adolescents

Research design

Longitudinal study (5 annual waves)

378 boys

9 schools

Quantitative –

- Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire - (emotion and behaviour)
- Quality of Life questionnaire – (health and well being)

Qualitative

- Self reporting questionnaires on boys' experiences of **school, community, masculinity and violence**
- Focus groups within six of the schools every year of the study
- Interviews with six Year Ten Head Teachers
- A case study of an All-Boys secondary School, and
- **Youth work interventions** delivered in two of the nine schools,

A Youth Work Methodology

- Looks to find how **Education fits into**, and contributes to, the lives of young people as a whole
- The educational nature of youth work is characterised by a **specific value system relating to social justice** and this is what distinguishes it from other approaches to learning
- It is about a **critical, relational-driven** encounter with young people
- An approach where we **extract knowledge and meaning** from an interaction between their experiences and ideas (*Constructivism*)
- **Creating the environment** that engages, stimulates and motivates (group work, role play etc)
- **The safe place** to explore fears, aspirations, their lives.
- Good youth work that **works WITH** young people not ON them
- Sees young people as **an asset** NOT a problem

Dissemination

- 21 presentations including 8 conferences
- Northern Ireland Assembly
- Government Departments (Justice & Education)
- Ministers` Special Advisors (Sinn Fein and DUP)
- Education Committee (MLA`s)
- Civil servants
- Teachers` Unions
- Regional Training Unit (overall teacher training responsibility)
- School Principals` conference
- Individual schools
- Youth Service / youth workers

Dissemination Strategy

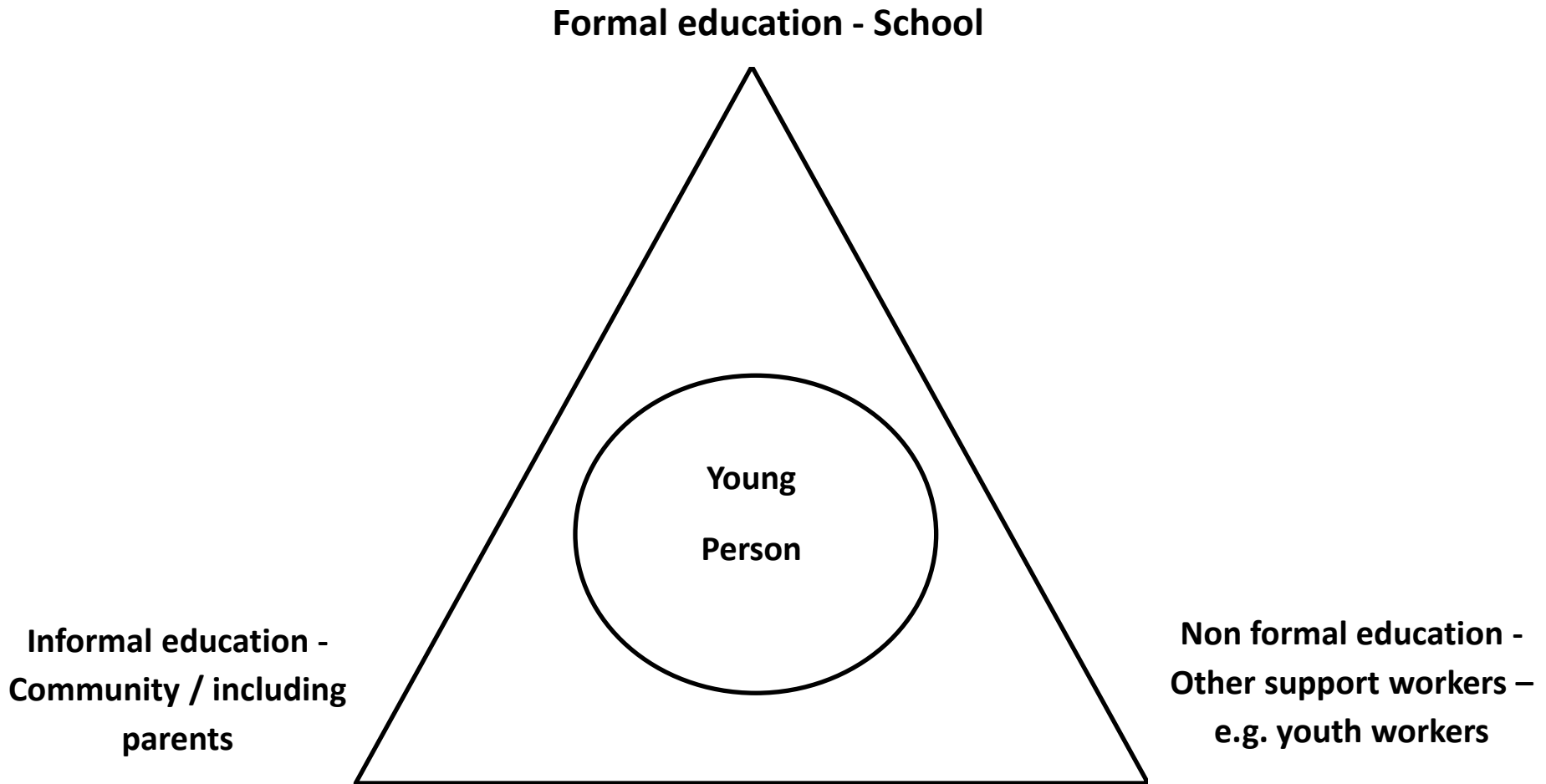
- Developing a creative and engaging way
 - Ensuring the voice of young men is central
 - It is not about telling teachers what to do
 - Cost and resource neutral
- Recommendations

Some Outcomes

- Consultants to an education Board on a multi disciplinary strategy to address boys attainment in schools
- Recommendation from Education Committee for Minister to take on board some of our recommendations e.g. gender specific approaches in classroom
- Advising our own University in Widening Access Approaches to increase applications from young men
- Potential case study for next REF (2019)

A 'Balanced Approach'

It takes a community to educate a child



We are all Educationalists

- Discussion and Questions

Taking Boys Seriously

report available at

www.cyms.ulster.ac.uk