



Restorative dialogue as a response to interpersonal harm at universities

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Problem

Problem: Bullying, sexual violence, aggression & discrimination among uni students and staff

Causes: alcohol, drugs, new norms, competition, temporary contracts, abuse of power

Consequences: trauma, toxic (work) relationships, sickness absence, expulsions and resignations

Current situation: new regulations and policies but they do not solve the problem



Restorative justice as an alternative solution

Applied to:

- Campuses in US, Canada, NZ, UK
- Student misconduct, sexual assault, hate crimes
- Mainly reactive, some preventative, few rehabilitative

Effectiveness:

- Offenders: greater student learning
- Victims: reduced anger, anxiety, fear
- Community: positive relationships, group agency
- Culture change?



Current research

- Investigate best practices, barriers and facilitators for culture change, and potential to apply to other universities
- Victoria University of Wellington (VUW): Restorative University
- 14 interviews with 15 key stakeholders
 - 1) Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team (SICR)
 - 2) Employee Assistance Resolution Services (EARS)
 - 3) Unions, risk assessment team, halls of residence, disciplinary board
 - 4) Te Ngāpara Centre for Restorative Practices



Art or abuse? Historical allegations surface about beloved music icon

- "So I wasn't involved in the harm, but I saw so much of the impact of it. And it was when I saw and heard the harmed parties sharing the impact on their lives of this harm from years ago. I was so sad. There was an anger, you know, all of those things. [...] The fact that they could share that and the institution had admitted fault. I felt like an emotional release of all of this kind of tension that I had been holding for five years that probably indirectly was harming me."
- "The general feedback I got from the instructors that it was like a game changer for the environment, for the students. Much fewer instances of strife. Much better outcomes in terms of students coming to class and doing well, learning. In four years the percentage of female students participating in the music classes grew "from 7% to 25%".
- After the circles which took a couple of years, "a lot of the conversations were mostly about like, 'should we perform his music or not?' [...] Which is an old debate. [...] There was less talk about what kind of environment we have. [...] There could have been more if they would have been able to actually align with restorative practices and philosophies to make restorative practices and principles permeate the school. But they were incapable of that."



Barriers and facilitators

Time

Money

Organisational support

Regulation

Sociopolitical climate

Culture

RJ culture change at universities

Positives:

- increased female student enrolment
- improved feelings of safety
- fewer expulsions
- less cases requiring HR intervention
- expansion from students to staff
- shift from reactive to proactive
- senior management applying circles
- change in student code of conduct
- employment court ruling

However:

- discussions not on a deeper level
- vulnerable to budget cuts and personnel changes
- student and staff population unaware

Applicability to other uni's



- Guideline (Karp)
 - dedicated team
 - expert-led trainings
 - revise policies
 - educate campus community
 - assess and evaluate
 - pilot before scaling up
- Organisational culture
 - Campus life
 - Public/private
 - Small/large
 - Informal policies in place
- We need a network for restorative universities

Conclusion

- Too soon to say that a 'systemic change' is made
- Definitely steps towards
- Recommended to start measuring



Thank you!

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