Doing harm in the name of protection: menstruation as a topic for sex education


Authors:
Diorio, Joseph A.
Munro, Jennifer A.

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Description:
Pubertal changes in girls and boys are treated differently in school materials in New Zealand. Girls are taught about menstruation in a scientific manner oriented towards reproduction, hygiene and personal stress. Boys receive more positive information about 'exciting' and 'powerful' bodily changes which they can enjoy. The picture of growing up which girls receive is relatively bleak, and is out of touch with the realities of their own lives and those of adult women around them. By attempting to protect girls and society at large from the problems associated with menstruation, schools risk damaging girls' self-image, their conceptions of their roles in society, and their development of positive attitudes towards their bodies and their sexuality.

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