

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Addysg a Dysgu Proffesiynol Athrawon | Inquiry into Teachers'
Professional Learning and Education

TT 05

Ymateb gan : Chwarae Teg

Response from : Chwarae Teg

1. Introduction

1.1 Chwarae Teg is working to build a Wales where women achieve and prosper. We do this by working with women to broaden their horizons and build their confidence and skills, and by working with employers to create modern workplaces that gain success through harnessing everyone's contribution. We also work with influencers, educators and decision makers to build a society that values, supports and benefits women and men equally.

1.2 Stereotypical ideas about men and women's roles in society continue to shape the career choices of boys and girls, and research shows that these ideas are formed at a very young age¹. Evidence suggests that education in particular can make a significant difference when tackling this segregation.

1.3 At its core, 'the new curriculum will have more emphasis on equipping young people for life'. In order to achieve this, it's key that both boys and girls develop skills and interests in school that reflect the employment opportunities that will be available to them, as opposed to being influenced by tradition and stereotyping.

1.4 Teachers play a central role in delivering this and therefore their professional learning and education should support them accordingly.

1.5 Specifically we would like to see:

1. Learning and education for teachers that equips them to understand gender as a cross cutting theme within the AOEs of the new curriculum.
2. Gender awareness training being included in initial teacher training for both primary and secondary education.

¹ Chwarae Teg & University of Derby (2013) "Gendered Horizon's: boys' and girls' perceptions of job and career choices"

3. Gender awareness training offered to teachers in schools that can be tailored to their setting.

2. New curriculum

2.1 With the current development of the new curriculum, as well as a review of initial teacher training in Wales, this is the opportune time to ensure the readiness of the teaching workforce to deliver all aspects of the new curriculum, including making sure it delivers equally for boys and girls.

2.2 By embedding gender awareness into teacher training we can equip teachers and careers staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to challenge stereotypes when they arise in the classroom. If we want to eradicate gender inequality, and equip every young person for life, tackling gender stereotypes is an important step.

2.3 The new curriculum lays out six clear 'Areas of Learning and Experience' (AOLE). It would seem appropriate for issues of gender equality to be dealt with most explicitly as part of the Health and Wellbeing AOLE, especially if this is where topics such as healthy relationships will sit. In the development of the principles underpinning this AOLE we would therefore expect to see gender equality explicitly referenced, and consequently in the training for teachers that accompanies those.

2.4 However, developing a teacher's understanding of gender stereotyping should not be limited to one AOLE. It's important that their learning and education informs them of the wider context of gender inequality and the implications on future employments prospects.

2.5 It would be particularly important to include reference to the gender segregation that exists within STEM subjects for example under the Science and Technology AOLE. Only 1 in 5 Physics A-level students are girls and women are still particularly under-represented in STEM careers, but 1 in 5 new jobs will be in STEM by 2022². Challenging stereotypes in the classroom is seen as important to addressing this segregation and making sure women can take advantage of these opportunities³.

² <http://www.careerswales.com/en/spotlight-on-stem/>

³ Welsh Government (2016) Talented Women for a Successful Wales.

2.6 It's therefore important that a Teacher's Learning and Education supports teachers to understand gender equality as a cross cutting issue, and encourages them to challenge stereotypes and help tackle inequality wherever necessary.

3. Initial Teacher training

3.1 As is outlined above, it's crucial that teachers are given adequate training to understand the wider impact their teaching can have on pupil's future decisions and aspirations. This can most easily be done during their initial teacher training.

3.2 Training should be given to teachers at all key stages. Research shows that interventions to challenge gender stereotyping in secondary and tertiary education are valuable and effective, while strong evidence points to early years' interventions being key to creating sustainable culture change⁴.

3.3 It is the role of both the HEIs and schools to promote the need for gender inclusive learning environments through initial teacher training. As part of gender awareness training, respectively they can provide trainee teachers with both the relevant knowledge and information to build these learning environments, and ways to actively challenge stereotypes in the classroom.

4. Continuing professional development

4.1 Gender awareness training shouldn't be limited to those entering the profession however. This training can also be delivered successfully to teachers already practicing as part of their ongoing professional development.

4.2 A successful project in this area was Chwarae Teg's Fair Foundations programme which worked with 55 primary schools in Wales to raise awareness of gender issues in education. Fair Foundations was developed as a support programme for education settings delivering Foundation Phase learning in Wales. Gender awareness training for teachers was a key element of the programme.

4.3 Everyone that took part said they felt better able to explain the difference between sex and gender, that they had a better understanding of how gender affects

⁴ Chwarae Teg (2015) "Fair Foundations final evaluation report" (not currently public but available on request)

a child's personal and social development, and understood how to the organise the learning environment to reduce gender stereotyping⁵.

4.4 One benefit of delivering the training in schools was that it allowed practitioners to identify tried-and-tested approaches that would work in their particular setting. Support was provided to develop specific initiatives, together with advice to further implement actions which promote gender equality in identified areas.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The new curriculum will allow teachers more freedom to teach in ways they feel will have the best outcomes for their learners. To make sure that this results in positive and lasting outcomes for every child, it's crucial that gender differences are understood and addressed. A teacher's professional learning and education should prepare them for this.

5.2 In turn, this can help address some of the inequalities and segregation that currently exist between men and women in the workplace, creating a fairer, more equal society in the long run.

We'd be happy to discuss any of the above in more detail. Please contact:

Eira Jepson – Policy and Communications Partner, Chwarae Teg

⁵ Ibid