

Gender, Education and Equalities



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The 'Gender Gap' in the headlines

One in six boys can't write their own name after a year at primary school(Daily Mail 13/10/2010)

Boys falling dramatically behind girls by the age of five (Daily Telegraph 04/02/2012)

The REAL gender gap scandal: Why boys are now the true victims of discrimination
(Mail Online, 8/8/2009)

Gender and Literacy gap

Table R2b. Difference in average scores of 15-year-old female and male students on PISA reading literacy scale, by education system: 2012

Education system	Female-male difference
Albania	15
United Kingdom	25
OECD average	38
Estonia	44
Jordan	75

Gender and Mathematics gap

Figure M2a. Difference in average scores of 15-year-old female and male students on PISA mathematics literacy scale, by education system: 2012

Education system	Female-male difference
Columbia, Luxembourg	-25
United Kingdom	-12
OECD average	-11
Estonia	-5
Jordan	25

Gender, literacy and FSM at Key Stage 2 UK

<input type="checkbox"/> Girls – non FSM	88%
<input type="checkbox"/> Boys - non FSM	79%
<input type="checkbox"/> Girls – FSM	71%
<input type="checkbox"/> Boys - FSM	58%

Gender Gap: KS2 English 2010

	Boys %	Girls %	Non FSM – Gap %
White British	80	89	9
Pakistani	74	82	8
Black African	78	88	10
			FSM - Gap
White British	56	69	13
Pakistani	66	73	7
Black African	64	76	12

Three main explanations for the 'gender gap'

- Feminisation of schooling
- Essential differences between boys and girls
- The social construction of masculinity and femininity

The 'feminisation' of schooling

- Argument that boys need more male teacher 'role models'
- Argument that boys need 'tougher' strategies of behaviour management, that can best be provided by more male teachers
- Argument that the curriculum/primary school 'culture' is feminised

Gender and Primary School Teachers project (1)

- Project looked at pupils' views as to whether gender of teacher makes a difference, and classroom observations
- 51 teachers/classrooms (half male, half female) and 300 pupils (aged 7-8) – in schools across the UK
- Mix of urban, small town and rural settings

Gender and Primary School Teachers Project (2)

- Children tended to stress the 'sameness' of men and women teachers – more important that they were 'good' or 'nice/kind'
- Role model argument – most children said they do not see their teachers as role models – of small minority who did – 2/3 girls
- No evidence that men teachers were 'tougher' or significant gender differences in teaching style

Essential Differences

- Argument maintaining 'Brain sex differences'
- Argument maintaining differences in physical and cognitive development
- Resulting in view that boys and girls have different learning preferences and styles

Social Construction of Gender

- Gender a social phenomenon, resulting in behavioural differences
- Boys learn from early age that literacy 'not really for them'
- Resulting in view that boys and girls may *tend to* different learning preferences and styles

Gender and teacher perceptions/practices

- Gender and teacher time/focus
- 'Diligent' girls vs 'naturally clever' but 'lazy' boys
- Stereotypes relating to ethnicity eg 'quiet Asian girls'

Gender and pupil identities

- Importance of peer cultures
- ‘Coolness’ and popularity in relation to achievement
- Boys/’masculinity’ and fear of being labelled a ‘nerd’

What *does* work?

It is in schools where gender constructions are less accentuated that boys tend to do better – and strategies that work to reduce constructions of gender difference that are most effective in facilitating boys' achievement.

Strategies to help deconstruct gender constructions in school

- A whole-school approach:
 - tackling stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity
 - expectations of high achievement for both girls and boys
- Instigating classroom discussion and thinking about gender constructions, their manifestations, and implications
- Using a wide variety of approaches to literacy – including using literacy as a vehicle for deconstructing stereotypes

Gender, cliques and 'popularity'

Discussion Points:

- From your own professional/personal experience, how far is there an issue of popularity hierarchies/cliques in elementary/secondary schools in Estonia?
- What would you believe Estonian children would answer in relation to the question 'what makes a popular/unpopular boy/girl?'