

Strasbourg, 2 December 2011

CDEG (2011) 16

STEERING COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN (CDEG)

STUDY ON "COMBATING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN EDUCATION"

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Gender Stereotyping - preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. Sex stereotyping can limit the development of the natural talents and abilities of boys and girls, women and men, as well as their educational experiences and life opportunities

BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1. In order to try to understand why gender stereotyping is so pervasive in European societies, it may be necessary to examine the influences in European cultures and beliefs over time. In ancient Greece, Aristotle argued that men should have authority over women because in women the rational element in the human soul is easily overruled by the irrational. He argued that it is natural for the rational element to have authority over the irrational. All men were presumed to be rational while all women were presumed to be irrational. This prized value of 'rationality' over other human characteristics was promulgated by philosophers and theologians throughout European history. Characteristics which were considered 'natural' for females were considered to be of less value, and women were deemed to be innately flawed and should therefore be subordinate to men. The assumption that only men are truly human permeated the beliefs and ideologies of writers throughout European history.

2. This ideology of female inferiority and subordination was so deeply ingrained into the values and cultures of European societies that most women as well as men accepted it without noticing that it existed. The French writer Christine Pizan (1365-1430) described how she tried to counter the assertions of so many male writers, that women are inherently wicked and full of every vice, but found herself agreeing with them saying it was impossible that so many famous men, among them renowned scholars, so clear sighted in all things as it seemed, could have been wrong in their beliefs about and attitudes towards women. Fortunately, Pizan went on to challenge these views and assertions. She argued that women were not innately inferior to men but that their inferior education and training had created the illusion of inequality.

3. Throughout the centuries, while some women from privileged backgrounds received an education and excelled in various disciplines; entered religious life; and women worked, inside and outside the home; in the fields; in factories; in others' homes to help support families, a fundamental commonality in all women's lives has been their subordination to men. Whatever position, work or role undertaken by women, it was traditionally valued less than its equivalent undertaken by men.

THE EDUCATION OF FEMALES

4. Early European feminists, such as Pizan, challenged the traditional views of women as being innately inferior to men and argued that their supposed inferiority was caused by their lack of education. They promoted education as the vehicle to make women better human beings and not, as was proposed by some writers, as a means of making them more pious or better wives and mothers.

5. Humanists, who advocated education for girls, did not intend that it should be for the benefit of the girl, but that it would enhance the life of her future husband. Sir Thomas More, the English Humanist believed that education made wives better companions to their husbands and better teachers of their children.

Revolutionary in their views of the education of the male, when it came to women the Humanists reinforced the most negative attitudes about the female nature and the way women should be treated. In every way the learned men of this new age intended to restrain and limit, not to encourage or expand, the young girl's or the woman's talents and the possibilities for her life. ...Even in the young girl, these learned men imagined the negative qualities delineated by classical and early Christian writers: the desire to dominate, a tendency to anger, pride, and idleness, and a propensity to sin and lustfulness¹.

6. While many European women received an education over the centuries, access to education, and particularly higher education, was not generally available to girls and women until the nineteenth century. Some universities did not permit women access until the early twentieth century. Some universities permitted women to attend, but did not grant them degrees. In Spain, four women who had passed their medical examinations in 1882, were refused degrees and instead were issued with certificates which did not allow them to practice as doctors. In some universities, women who attended medical school were subjected to violence and other forms of discrimination. The traditional arguments of the inferiority of women were used by the opponents to their participation in higher education.

7. Most European countries were providing free primary education for girls as well as boys by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, where the emphasis was on the acquisition of literacy and simple numeracy skills. Post-primary education reflected the beliefs and values of societies of the time and provided separate curricula for boys and girls. European women themselves were divided as to whether girls should be educated differently from boys, placing an emphasis on skills which would prepare them for their future roles as wife and mother. French public secondary schools did not provide Latin or Greek for girls which were essential for admission to universities. The Prussian minister for education ruled, in 1891, that secondary girls' schools should remain controlled by men and later decreed that girls' curricula should be nine hours to the boys' twelve, that household arts be compulsory and that time be given each week to needlework. In Ireland, where most secondary girls' schools were run by nuns, there was an emphasis on the development of moral and spiritual values, refinement and traditional accomplishments rather than on the preparation for independent living. This reflected the education for girls provided in other European Catholic countries.

¹ A History of Their Own, Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present, vol. II, Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith P. Zinsser, Penguin 1988

WHAT IS TAUGHT IN EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

8. Given the long history of prejudice, discrimination, and opposition to reforms in favour of women, it is understandable that patriarchy became firmly established in every sphere of European societies. As male was considered the human norm, it was men's experience that determined how societies should be structured and it was their knowledge and theory, constructed within the framework of a patriarchal paradigm of human society, that have been passed down as our intellectual inheritance.

The view that schools transmit our 'common cultural heritage' has given way to a recognition that out of the enormous range of ideas, values and knowledge available in any culture, only a fraction is selected as suitable for transmission in schools. The question then becomes: what are the criteria behind this selection, which social groups benefit from the inclusion of their forms of thought, and which social groups lose through the exclusion of their forms of thought?²

9. In the book, *Girls Don't Do Honours*³, Cullen argues that under the spotlight of feminist scrutiny, one of patriarchy's most striking characteristics is seen to be its ability to avoid detection and remain effectively invisible.

Obviously it is not invisible in any literal sense. Aristotle and many of the other patriarchal thinkers were only too explicit in the articulation of their views about women. Yet generation after generation of women and men have gone through the formal and informal educational systems of western societies without ever becoming aware of the patriarchal value-system within which so much of what they learn has been constructed. It would be more accurate to say without ever coming to know it as a named and definable paradigm. This distinction between levels of awareness needs to be examined. It carries serious implications for how we all, women and men, know ourselves and locate ourselves within our culture⁴.

10. Cullen argues that sexism is invisible to people socialised within a patriarchal society. In a study undertaken in 2002⁵, Lynch and Lodge found that pupils were unaware of sexist practices in school life or if aware, they disregarded them.

Gender inequality was not part of most students' daily vocabulary-of-analysis. Students often seemed to lack both the language and the general awareness to articulate concerns about gender issues. There was also a sense in which sexist behaviour was considered 'normal'⁶.

11. It would appear that the invisibility of patriarchy continues to flourish in many educational establishments in the twenty-first century.

² Gender Mainstreaming in Education, a Reference Manual for governments and Other Stakeholders, *Elsa Leo-Rhynie and the Institute of Development and Labour Law, University of Cape Town, 1999*

³ *Girls Don't Do Honours, Irish Women in Education in the 19th and 20th Centuries, edited by Mary Cullen, Argus Press, 1987*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *Equality and Power in Schools, Redistribution, Recognition and Representation, Kathleen Lynch and Anne Lodge, RoutledgeFalmer, 2002*

⁶ *ibid*

PROGRESS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

12. The progress in the struggle for women's rights was relatively rapid throughout the twentieth century. The rise of the Feminist movement contributed greatly to this progress in Western European countries in particular. However, the progress was not even and at times it was reversed.

Women are a reserve army of labour to be brought in and out of the workforce to suit the changing needs of the economy and the nation⁷.

13. When needed in the workplace, either in times of war or because of economic necessity, women were encouraged, or if considered necessary, conscripted into the workforce. After the two world wars, or during economic recessions, men were considered to have greater rights to available employment and so women in Western European countries were firmly told that their place was in the home. If they resisted, they were subjected to discriminatory practices, such as a marriage bar and a withdrawal of benefits.

14. After the Second World War, with the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, the Council of Europe in 1949 and the European Economic Community in 1957 (now the European Union), the principle of equality between men and women was seen as a fundamental human and democratic right and incorporated into the conventions, treaties and other legal instruments adopted by the member states of these organisations. Most European countries have enacted legislation which reflects this principle of gender equality and which prohibits discrimination against women.

15. In a recent Council of Europe survey⁸, in which forty-four of its member states participated, forty-three have incorporated the principle of equality between women and men into their national laws on education. Thirty-five of these have specifically addressed gender equality in their national laws. In another recent survey carried out by the 'Eurydice network'⁹ three legislative models were identified: general equal treatment and equal opportunities; equal treatment and equal opportunities in education; and gender equality in education.

16. Reference to gender equality specifically, the third model identified in the Eurydice study and in the question posed in the Council of Europe survey, is considered important as it signals political commitment to gender equality in terms of educational outcomes as opposed to a general principle of equal treatment and equal opportunities.

17. While an essential pre-requisite for the achievement of equality between women and men, legislation in itself does not guarantee *de facto* gender equality. Policies, strategies and actions need to accompany legislation in order to ensure that the objective of empowering all people, girls and boys, men and women to realise their human potential and to lead fulfilled lives is actualised. With the adoption of the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration, at the United Nations Fourth World Conference in 1995, the promotion of the strategy of gender mainstreaming was

⁷ Discovering Women's History, A practical guide to researching the lives of women since 1800, *Deirdre Beddoe, Longman, 1998*

⁸ Council of Europe survey on the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 10 October 2007.

⁹ Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes: Study on the Measures Taken and the Current Situation in Europe, *Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2010*

considered to be the most effective means of achieving the objectives of the Platform. National governments were asked to adopt this strategy in their commitment to the achievement of gender equality. The General Assembly twenty-third special session to follow up implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (June 2000) enhanced the mainstreaming mandate within the United Nations.

18. The Council of Europe has from its inception, considered equality between men and women in all spheres of public and private life, as a fundamental principle of human rights and democracy.

19. *Recommendation No. R (98) 14 on Gender Mainstreaming* adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 April 1998, encouraged decision-makers *to create an enabling environment and facilitate conditions for the implementation of gender mainstreaming to achieve effective equality between women and men*. The Committee of Ministers also adopted in April 1998 a *Message to steering committees of the Council of Europe on gender mainstreaming*, asking all steering committees of the Council of Europe to study carefully the report on gender mainstreaming, with a view to taking inspiration from it and implementing this strategy in their programme of activities.

20. Since the mid 1990s, the Council of Europe highlighted the importance of education in the achievement of gender equality and has initiated actions to address the issue. In 1997 in Istanbul, at the 4th Council of Europe Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men, ministers recommended that the equality and education sectors in the Council of Europe join their efforts to promote gender equality education and non-stereotyped education at all levels of the education system. These joint efforts led to the drafting of a recommendation on gender mainstreaming in education adopted on 10 October 2007 by the Committee of Ministers. *Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 – Gender mainstreaming in education* sets out a number of measures to combat gender stereotypes.

21. Concerned, that despite actions undertaken, through committees, programmes and legal instruments, the Council of Europe continues to address the perpetuation of gender stereotyping and sexism in education throughout the member states and to this end has conducted an evaluation of the progress made in implementing the measures contained in Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13. It also recognises that the history of inequalities between men and women is long and complex and that legislation and positive actions alone will not necessarily achieve *de facto* gender equality.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Performance and achievement

22. The focus on academic performance and achievement is clearly important for personal advancement and for countries' economic growth and social cohesion. This is particularly important as economies grow increasingly dependent on knowledge advancement to sustain development in an ever increasing competitive world. In its strategy for 2020¹⁰, the European Commission sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century. In terms of education, it asks countries to translate EU goals into national targets and trajectories.

23. International assessments of pupils' academic performance are undertaken on a regular basis. In 2011, more than 60 countries and jurisdictions participated in the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS). Other international assessments include the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) and *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS). Gender differences in educational attainment have been a major feature of these studies and have highlighted differences in achievement in reading, mathematics and science between girls and boys. (For a detailed analysis of the results in relation to gender differences, see page 34 of *Gender Difference in Educational Outcomes, Study on the Measures Taken and the Current Situation in Europe*).

24. A feature of all of the comparative international studies in relation to gender differences in achievement in reading, mathematics and science, is the lack of any form of consistency between the achievement of boys and girls across all countries and across the years in which the assessments were conducted. Gender patterns in achievement varied not only across countries, but also across schools in individual countries. In most countries, the gender gap in reading varied significantly from one school to another.

25. Other related findings from the assessments (PISA 2000) were that females were found to have a much higher level of engagement with most forms of reading activities; they read more diverse material and used libraries more often than males; and when reading for pleasure they were more likely than males to read more demanding texts, such as fiction. Fifteen year-old males on the other hand had limited engagement in reading beyond what was required of them; and were more likely to read newspapers and comic books as opposed to more demanding texts. PISA 2000 also found that there was a pattern between interest and achievement in reading and in mathematics. Higher interest in reading for females was true in all countries. In mathematics, the majority of countries showed males to have higher interest in mathematics, with only two countries where females reported a higher level of interest than males.¹¹

26. While all international studies found less gender differences in achievement in science than in reading and mathematics across countries, PISA 2006 reported that despite performing equally as well as boys in most countries, girls tended to have a lower self-concept than males in science; on average, girls had lower levels of belief in their scientific abilities than boys in all European countries. Boys also had higher

¹⁰ Europe 2020, a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, *European Commission, Brussels 3.3.10*

¹¹ Gender Differences and Similarities in Achievement, Chapter 5, PISA 2000, *OECD*

self-efficacy, i.e. a higher level of confidence in tackling specific scientific tasks, in almost all countries.

27. Gender differences in educational attainment have also been a major focus for educational research in recent years and have attracted considerable media attention. Much of the media coverage has focused on the 'underachievement' of boys relative to girls. While in the past, girls' 'underperformance' relative to boys in subjects such as mathematics, was attributed to their lesser cognitive ability to engage with the subject, among the theories proffered to explain the 'underachievement' of boys are; the feminisation of the teaching profession and the practice of teaching methodologies which favour girls' learning styles; too much focus on disadvantages experienced by girls in the past.

Education systems failing boys?

28. What research has demonstrated is that not all boys are failing and not all girls are successful academically. Not all males or all females are homogeneous and factors such as social class, ethnicity, disability and other differences have a profound bearing on the academic achievement of both males and females. Gilberts¹² argue that much of the work that needed to be done for girls in the reform process is unnecessary for many boys.

Boys are not necessarily disadvantaged in terms of the construction of the school curriculum if access to male subjects, male stories and male constructions of knowledge counts as a key criterion. And most boys are not marginalised or silenced by pedagogical practices at school...however, it is critical to see how only some groups of boys benefit here...and some groups of boys - notably indigenous boys, boys from various ethnic backgrounds, and homosexual boys- will not wish to identify with the 'maleness' on offer.¹³

29. Younger and Warrington¹⁴ quoted from Cohen (1996:133) that from the late seventeenth century to the present, boys have always underachieved but this was never treated as a problem. It did not prevent boys from proceeding to grammar schools in England nor did it hinder their progression to higher education and to promotion in employment. Younger and Warrington warn that the debate on the gender gap and on male underachievement which has been one of the most dominant in educational discourses since the 1990s, not only in England but also in other Western countries, is fraught with dangers and misconceptions. They question what the term underachievement means and suggest that there is need to re-examine this concept.

¹² Masculinity goes to School, Rob Gilbert and Pam Gilbert, Routledge, 1998

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ Raising Boys' Achievement in Secondary Schools, Issues, Dilemmas and Opportunities, Mike Younger and Molly Warrington with Ros McLellan, Open University Press, 2005

We can see from the literature analysed that there has been a shift from gender and education as a field largely concerned with righting the wrongs against girls and women, historically, culturally and educationally, to a policy field influenced by cross-cultural studies of examination performance and boys' educational underachievement. Sex difference research remains the most popular study of gender issues in education and is especially prominent in cross-cultural studies of achievement¹⁵.

30. On the other hand, the success that (some) girls and young women enjoy in education, is not converted into post-education opportunities, as evidenced by the pay gap that still exists for women, (an average of 17% across Europe¹⁶); their level of domestic responsibilities and their under-representation in public life and in decision making and senior management positions. Among the largest companies listed on the Stock Exchange across Europe in 2009, men accounted for 89% of the board members and women 11%. The one exception to this was Norway who had 42% women on the boards of the largest listed companies. In 2009, all of the Central Banks of the EU member states had a male governor¹⁷. The publication reported on research carried out in 2002 where 500 senior women from corporations and professional firms across Europe were interviewed about the barriers to the advancement of women.

31. Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that stereotypes and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities were the most important obstacle they faced. The stereotype that women should take primary responsibility for raising the family and the association of strong leadership and business skills with stereotypical male characteristics, continue to act as an obstacle for women's advancement and men's continued dominance in senior management positions.

Education for personal and social development

32. Lynch and Lodge¹⁸ argue that the classical-liberal and the mathematical-scientific curricula form the basis of much of what counts as valued knowledge in most Western-style education. Little time or attention is given to the forms of knowledge or understanding that inform affective development.

Most educational research in sociology assumes that the inequality problem in education has little to do with the affective domain. Learners are defined as rational rather than affective actors; inequality is defined as a problem of cognitive difference or deficit.¹⁹

33. Gilberts²⁰ list the most serious educational deficiencies for boys as: their under-participation in all subjects with a non-technology focus and in some crucial areas e.g. parenting; their failure to consider family, friendship and community aspects of

¹⁵ Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes, Study on Measures Taken and the Current Situation in Europe, *Eurydice network*

¹⁶ Eurostat Yearbook 2010, Europe in figures. *Eurostat Statistical books*

¹⁷ More Women in senior positions, key to economic stability and growth, *European Commission 1010*

¹⁸ Equality and Power in Schools, Redistribution, Recognition and Representation, *Kathleen Lynch and Anne Lodge, RoutledgeFalmer, 2002*

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ Masculinity goes to School.

preparing for a career; their dependency for self-esteem on traditional estimations of masculinity, such as sporting or fighting skills, superiority over females, and job status. Younger and Warrington refer to new modes of assessment which can assess the broader aspects of achievement such as students' relationships with peers and adults, their leadership skills, their sociability and sensitivity and their involvement in community, sport and the creative arts.

34. The theory of multiple intelligences which was developed by professor Howard Gardner and now widely accepted by educationalists, suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence is far too limited. Instead, he proposes eight different intelligences to account for a broader range of human potential in children and adults. Two of these intelligences; interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence fall within the affective domain and involve the development of personal and social skills: skills required to take care of one's physical and mental health; to communicate effectively; to form and maintain relationships; to participate in all spheres of private and public life; and to achieve personal fulfilment.

35. In the survey of member states on progress in implementing the measures contained in the Recommendation on gender mainstreaming (Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13), almost half of the countries indicated that schools in their respective countries were not required to ensure that boys have access to subjects in second-level education which focus on personal and social development, including health education.

36. Concern for this lack of provision is rarely highlighted in the debates about the education of boys, despite the evidence that more boys than girls disengage with education; cause more discipline problems in school; drop out of school early; and in later life appear to have greater difficulty coping with life stresses and difficulties.

37. In Ireland, a programme specifically for boys aged between 15 and 18 years was developed by the Department of Education and Science. *Exploring Masculinities* addresses social and personal issues related to males, including communication skills; sex role stereotyping and other forms of stereotyping; sexual orientation; violence against women; as well as issues around subject choices and careers.

Attitudes and behaviour of school personnel

38. The values, practices, structures, organisation, and teaching in many schools throughout Europe operate according to traditional stereotyped beliefs. In studies where principals/head teachers and class teachers were interviewed, many held stereotyped beliefs about the abilities and future roles of boys and girls, men and women. Many were reluctant to discuss gender equality, claiming that gender is not an issue for them, that they are 'gender neutral' and treat all pupils equally. This was one of the findings in the Council of Europe survey of teachers in a number of member states²¹.

39. Research does not support these assertions. International research on classroom interactions between teachers and pupils consistently has found that teachers interact differently with boys and girls. There is a large body of international research in relation to the interactions between teachers and pupils in classrooms.

²¹ Promoting Gender Mainstreaming in Schools, *Council of Europe, 2004*

40. The findings overwhelmingly found that teachers (both male and female) interact differently with boys and girls. Among the findings were the following: boys receive a disproportionate percentage of all teacher-student interactions; boys are more likely than girls to initiate interactions with teachers; boys are praised more often than girls; boys are asked more questions than girls, and of questions asked, are posed more challenging ones; boys' contributions are more frequently accepted by teachers.

41. Given the experience of girls in classrooms, it may not be surprising to find that they have less self-confidence than boys, particularly in areas traditionally considered to be a male domain. The findings of PISA 2006 in relation to science, supports this conclusion. Girls' lack of confidence in their own ability was a theme that emerged throughout interviews with science teachers in a study by Ryan²². However, the teachers did not appear to accept any personal responsibility for this lack of confidence or associate it in any way with their teaching practices. They appeared to have accepted it as a characteristic of girls, and none had tried to address it as a problem. When Ryan interviewed girls and asked why more of them did not study physics, she received responses such as 'I wouldn't be able to handle that', 'too hard for me', 'it's very mathsy, and boyish'. When she asked if science generally was considered to be a 'male' area of study the responses from the girls reflected the traditional stereotyped beliefs in relation to males having greater ability in science areas. One girl referred to males having more white cells in the brain which makes them better at science!

42. Ryan also encountered the reluctance by teachers to address gender equality specifically. She concluded that gender equality was not a 'school issue' a point that was reiterated in her interviews with school personnel. They claimed that 'school issues' are about students, not whether they are male or female. She found this reluctance to address gender equality among principals/head teachers, teachers, guidance personnel and among pupils themselves. Schools claimed they take gender equality for granted, 'treating everyone the same' was a particular theme.

Raising issues of gender difference was perceived as irrelevant to the business of schools, either because it is taken for granted (it is implicit in all that we do, but there would be a shock response if other than equality was anywhere in the air) or because the approach is to not distinguish between male and female students (exemplified in the response 'all policies have reference to students. The distinction male/female is never referred to').²³

43. This gender blindness was repeated by school personnel in all schools included in the study. Most science teachers in the study said they never heard of the term 'gender mainstreaming' and did not question why less girls than boys opted to study physics.

44. When questioned about gender mainstreaming, a guidance counsellor responded that gender mainstreaming should not address girls' issues but should focus on boys, because boys were underachieving, claiming that examinations were 'girl oriented' and it is boys who need boosting, not girls.

²² Gendering the School Plan, Science Subject Uptake by Senior Cycle Students in the Post-Primary Sector, Lorna Ryan, *The Liffey Press in association with the Gender Equality Unit/Department of Education and Science, 2006*

²³ Gendering the School Plan p.61

45. Despite the claims by school personnel that gender equality was taken for granted, some responses from science teachers, guidance personnel and from pupils themselves indicated that gender stereotyping was alive and well, if not recognised. In relation to careers in scientific industries, a guidance counsellor claimed that the requirement to undertake shift work was *no life, particularly for a girl, for a family life*.

46. From the interviews conducted with guidance counsellors, Ryan concluded that the theme of science-based high-tech jobs (the jobs of the future), often involving shift work, as being unsuitable for girls, in the context of family life, ran throughout interviews. Guidance counsellors also considered that males are motivated by money whereas females are motivated by happiness and that 'boring' jobs are eschewed more by females than by males.

47. Teacher education in most European countries is provided by third-level institutions which have autonomy to design their own courses. The inclusion of gender equality issues depends on the providers of the courses and is not generally considered in the pre-service training of teachers. There are some exceptions, but these are usually dependant on individual providers. While most countries have developed gender equality policies in higher education, their primary goal is to combat horizontal segregation and the gender imbalance in the choice of academic disciplines by females. The content of courses remains a function of the institutions themselves.

48. In Portugal, the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2007-2010) envisaged as a strategic area of intervention, the promotion of the integration of a gender dimension not only in the specifications of competence profiles, but equally in the training profiles of educational professionals, namely teachers, teacher assistants and those responsible for educational and professional guidelines.

49. In Finland, a research project was started in 2008 focussing on 'Equality and Gender-Sensitivity in Teacher Education' (TASUKO) (3) which aims at providing future teachers with more theoretical and practical information on how they can promote gender equality and how they can act in a more gender-sensitive way in their work. Within the project, curricula and methodologies will be developed as well as a research programme and research results will be incorporated into teacher education.

Single sex education

50. The issue of the value, or not, of educating girls or boys in single sex schools continues to be debated not just in Europe but also in other Western countries. Much of this debate has been around whether single sex education enhances academic achievement for either girls or boys. Less attention has been paid to the socialisation of children and young people in a single sex environment or to pupils' own preferences. There has been an increase in single-sex schooling in recent years in a number of countries, either in the form of single-sex classes within co-educational schools or in separate single-sex schools. There has also been considerable research on the issue internationally.

51. Some of the findings of the research carried out in English speaking countries were included in an article *Single-sex Education: What Does Research Tell Us?*²⁴

²⁴ Single –sex Education: What Does Research Tell Us?, Emer Smyth, *Revue française de pédagogie* [171] avril-mai-juin 2010, pages 47-55

One of the most commonly discussed differences between the two settings related to the dominance of boys in the classroom. So from this perspective, the presence of boys in the classroom is seen as having a negative effect on girls' academic engagement and achievement. Other commentators have pointed to the 'distraction' inherent in co-educational settings for adolescents. A number of studies explored the way in which schools serve as sites for the construction of masculinity and femininity. Thus, particular subject areas, such as mathematics and physics, may become constructed as 'masculine' leading to tensions for female students in selecting these subjects and performing well in them.

52. Smyth concluded that despite considerable variation between and within countries in the conclusions reached, depending on the research methods and analytical techniques employed and outcomes considered, there appears to be very little consensus on whether single-sex education is advantageous to girls' or boys' academic achievement.

However, there did appear to be, at least tentative, evidence that attitudes to subject areas may become more gender-stereotyped in a co-educational setting.

53. In the United States, there has been a proliferation of single sex provision in recent years. In a study, the results of which were published in Science Magazine²⁵ in September 2011, the researchers carried out a meta-analysis of large scale reviews of single sex education (both in single- sex schools and single- sex classes within co-educational schools) from the US, Britain, Canada and New Zealand. The researchers found little or no difference between academic achievement in single-sex and co-educational schools when factors such as social class and academic ability upon entering the school, were accounted for. Whether in single-sex or co-educational schools, there was an overlap in the achievements of boys and girls.

54. There was evidence however that differences between the sexes grew in sex-segregated environments, making positive interaction between boys and girls more difficult, and that segregation of boys and girls increases the prevalence of sexism and sex- stereotyping.

55. The authors also found that brain research did not support a belief that males and females learn differently. They concluded that boys and girls can learn equally, and engage positively, when a variety of learning methods are used. In an interview about the research, Diane Halpern claims that experience is the greatest architect of the brain, not brain differences.

²⁵ The Pseudoscience of Single-sex Schooling, Diane Halpern et al, Science Magazine, 23 September 2011

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN EDUCATION,- PROGRESS?

56. Measuring the progress made in European countries in the achievement of gender equality through education is difficult. Schools, while powerful influencers in the development and sustainability of societies, they are nevertheless microcosms of the societies they serve and to a large extent they do not question the values or cultural practices of that society. In relation to gender equality, from the evidence that is available, school managers and teachers continue to demonstrate traditional attitudes in relation to boys and girls in the context of school structures, organisation, curricula, practices and importantly in their teaching.

57. Gender stereotyping continues to influence the behaviour and practices of school personnel, despite equality legislation, policies, international commitments and initiatives on the part of national governments.

58. In the Council of Europe's publication *Promoting Gender Mainstreaming in Schools*, a framework strategy for promoting gender mainstreaming in schools was outlined. The framework set out the various actors that should be involved in the process. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2007, made five main recommendations to the governments of member states. In order to ascertain progress in implementing the recommendations, a questionnaire was sent to all member states of the Council in early 2011. The information sought in the questionnaire was based on the five recommendations contained in the Recommendation *Gender mainstreaming in education*.

59. Forty- four countries responded to the questionnaire. Almost all countries have incorporated the principle of equality between men and women into national laws on education. A significant majority also indicated that they have developed policies, plans or programmes to promote the strategy of gender mainstreaming. However, from the responses to questions to ascertain who the targets of these policies, plans or programmes were, it is evident that schools were not, in a majority of cases. In the Eurydice study²⁶, similar conclusions were drawn.

While countries have implemented various different policy instruments, more general strategies are often lacking...although the list of potential policy measures that aim at changing traditional gender roles and stereotypes is long, only a few countries have put them into action.

Awareness-raising-fundamental to progress

60. As already described, the history of gender stereotyping is long and is deeply rooted in European cultures and societies, *the issues... are part of a whole complex pattern in which gender and its cultural connotations interact*²⁷ Traditional attitudes, essentialist beliefs about the nature of men and women and male hegemony continue to influence the behaviour of many individuals, women as well as men.

²⁶ Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes: Study on the Measures Taken and the Current Situation in Europe, *Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency* P9 Eurydice, 2010

²⁷ Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes, *Eurydice*, 2009

61. Despite the achievement of human and democratic rights by women, spearheaded by feminists and the feminist movements of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and promoted by international organisations such as the Council of Europe, gender stereotyping and sexism remain the greatest obstacles to the *de facto* achievement of gender equality in the twenty-first century. Unless legislation and policies are accompanied by comprehensive strategies, beginning with awareness-raising programmes for all stakeholders in the education system; policy makers, ministry personnel, school authorities, teachers, parents and pupils, success in the elimination of gender stereotyping may be limited.

62. The following comments from school personnel which have been documented in a number of research studies, highlight a blindness and defensiveness to the issue of gender equality: *'we take gender equality for granted' 'we treat everyone the same' 'girls outperform boys in all academic assessments, so the concern should be for boys' underachievement. Ryan, in her study concluded that raising issues about gender equality is a 'feminist' project; it is seen as irrelevant to day-to-day concerns*²⁸.

63. The Council of Europe survey sought information concerning awareness-raising activities for stakeholders in the education system. Thirty-five countries have implemented awareness-raising activities relating to gender equality and gender mainstreaming for the staff of the Ministry of Education. Twenty-three countries have prepared guidelines for relevant authorities and personnel to assist them in implementing gender mainstreaming. However, not all of the twenty-three targeted all stakeholders and all aspects of school life. Twenty-six countries include gender mainstreaming and its promotion in the pre-service training of teachers and thirty-two include gender mainstreaming and its promotion in in-service training of teachers. The need to include gender equality issues in the pre-service of teachers has been highlighted in numerous studies and international reports.

64. Schools, as microcosms of the society they serve, reproduce practices rather than reflect on them. Teachers, unless made aware of their own socialisation and provided with opportunities to reflect on their own values and beliefs during their training, unconsciously in most cases, accept the *status quo* set down by the society they serve or in which they live.

65. All pre-service training courses for teachers should include, as a mandatory element of the course, modules on gender equality and how to implement gender mainstreaming as an essential requirement of good teaching. Student teachers should also have opportunities to examine their own values and beliefs in the context of their socialisation and should be challenged to assess the possible impact of these on their future teaching practices and interactions with pupils.

*If student teachers should learn anything, they should learn that gender equality is about lifting barriers that limit the opportunities and choices of both sexes. It is about enriching the classroom experience, widening opportunities and expanding choices for all pupils*²⁹.

²⁸ Gendering the School Plan, Lorna Ryan, 2006

²⁹ Different Planets? Caroline Rinehan, 2006

62. In-service training modules on gender mainstreaming should also be a mandatory requirement for all serving teachers who should be made aware of the possible serious consequences of gender 'blindness' for their pupils, boys as well as girls. Specific abilities, talents, aptitudes and interests are not limited on the basis of the gender of a pupil, they are spread across individuals of both genders. Teachers need to be conscious of this in their teaching and expectations for their pupils.

Role of parents in the promotion of gender equality

66. Parents³⁰ play a major role in the early socialisation of their children and continue to influence their personal, educational and other choices throughout their years in school. In a study in Ireland³¹, when pupils were asked 'who helped you choose your subjects for the Leaving Certificate?' (State examination taken at age 18 years) 67% said 'parents'.

67. Parents also transmit their values, beliefs and cultural traditions to their children. In some cultures, these can be stereotyped along gender lines and may not reflect national policies in relation to gender equality. Parents therefore must be included as key players in schools' promotion of gender mainstreaming activities and must be assisted in understanding what is involved in the process.

68. Challenging gender stereotyping in schools without the involvement and co-operation of parents could lead to tensions for either girls or boys in relation to educational, training or career choices. Parents may not be aware of the obligations of schools in relation to compliance with legislation and should be informed accordingly. In the Council of Europe study, countries were asked if they provided guidelines on gender mainstreaming which were aimed at parents. Only eight countries had developed such guidelines.

69. Parents are involved in the socialisation of their children from the moment they are born; through infancy, childhood, adolescence and often into early adulthood. Their interactions with sons and daughters may be gender stereotyped; in the way they dress them; the toys they give them; the way they play and interact with them; the behaviour they permit and the rules they apply. While there are other influences in the socialisation process of children and adolescents, parents in the main play the most significant role. Parents therefore should be made aware of the consequences of gender role stereotyping;- how it can affect the holistic development of girls and boys and limit their life chances and personal fulfilment.

70. In Cyprus, parents' training in communication skills, mutual respect, and equality are carried out by the Pedagogical Institute and the Educational Psychology Service, in order to foster the balance of power within families. In addition, the Educational Psychology Service aims at enhancing parental awareness on the impact of parents' actions on their children's development through the conduction of individual interviews and meetings with parents.

71. In Ireland, as part of the gender mainstreaming strategy, the Department (Ministry) of Education and Science developed guidelines which address the whole school community, including parents. The guidelines, which are included in two

³⁰ Parents,- include guardians, foster parents or persons acting in loco parentis who have a child in their care subject to any statutory power or order of a court

³¹ Survey of Student Guidance in Post-Primary Schools, *Department of Education and Science, 2006/2007*

resource packs - Equal Measures for primary schools and eQuality Measures for second-level schools, provide parents with: information about schools' obligations in relation to equality legislation; an explanation of gender mainstreaming and what it entails; suggestions for actions that parents can undertake to contribute to gender mainstreaming in the school. Interviews with parents are included on DVDs which are part of the packs.

Formal curriculum

72. The formal curriculum is considered to be the central element of the education of children and young people. Many countries have a national or regional prescribed curriculum which includes mandatory elements such as reading and numeracy in primary education and languages, literature, mathematics and general science in lower secondary education. Other subjects may also be mandatory in different countries. As pupils progress through second-level education, they choose from a range of subjects and programmes offered by schools.

73. Without intervention on the part of schools to ensure that pupils choose optional subjects and educational programmes for which they have an aptitude and an interest in, and which will lead to career opportunities, adolescents will not want to appear different to their peers and will likely opt for traditional gendered choices.

74. Perceptions that some subjects are for boys or girls need to be challenged by school personnel. Teachers also need to be aware of the content of the subjects they teach and of the textbooks and teaching materials they use. The syllabi of many subjects exclude the contribution of women to the subject or fail to cover aspects of women's lives, or if they are included, they are stereotyped. Nineteen countries in the Council of Europe survey have prepared guidelines for schools to assist them to promote gender mainstreaming in the delivery of the formal curriculum.

75. In Malta, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) carried out a project *Facilitating Equality through Education*, with the aim of challenging gender roles and stereotypes in the formal education process which often led primary and secondary school pupils to aspire for work and private life roles influenced by their gender rather than by their interests and capabilities. To achieve this objective, policymakers, teachers and pupils alike, were sensitised to the need for greater gender equality, work/life balance with equal responsibilities and gender neutral language. This project disseminated material as well as organised a number of activities aimed at children such as: slots on children's television programmes; a competition for children; and the dissemination of educational material distributed to schools.

Science and technology

72. In a world that is becoming more dependant on technology and in particular on information communication technology (ICT), it is essential that girls as well as boys, have access to all of the school's ICT facilities and that they are equally encouraged to take technology subjects in second-level education. As the demand for the products and services of technology grows internationally, the requirement for suitably qualified personnel to work in these sectors will increase.

73. In most European countries in 2009, over 50 percent of students in tertiary education were female. However they constituted on average, between 15 and 30

percent of the total numbers studying engineering, manufacturing and construction and between 30 and 40 percent of the total numbers studying science, mathematics and computing³². While it is difficult to assess to what degree gender stereotyping influences pupils' third-level and career choices, it can be inferred from the statistics that schools are not proactive enough in encouraging their pupils to make non-traditional choices. Only half of the countries in the Council of Europe survey indicated that schools in their respective country are either required or encouraged to set targets to increase the number of girls taking science and technology subjects in second-level education.

74. When considering careers, girls should be provided with information about the opportunities available in the scientific and technological fields and they should be encouraged to consider these in the course of their career guidance programmes. Likewise, boys should be encouraged to consider careers in teaching and the caring professions. It is essential therefore that in the course of their training and in-service programmes, career guidance personnel are made aware of the need to be proactive in challenging stereotyped attitudes and choices among their pupils when they are considering third-level or further education courses, training and careers.

75. In Germany, a nationwide day of action – *Girls' Day* - takes place on the fourth Thursday in April each year. On that day, companies, businesses, educational and research institutions as well as government agencies invite girls to visit their workplaces. The girls have opportunities to learn about careers in science and technology and they meet women who work in these sectors. A website www.girls-day.de provides more information about the project. A *Boys' Day* will commence in April 2012.

76. In the United Kingdom, the *Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (WiSET)* team organise *Girls' Days* which are open to girls aged between 11 and 18 years. The events cover diverse careers in the fields of science, engineering and technology. The purpose of the events is to excite and inspire the participants about the wealth of opportunities open to them through further study, higher education and/or a career in SET industries. Each day includes at least one talk from a role model from either higher education or the SET industries. Short taster events are also arranged within schools. Their website www.wiset.org.uk provides further information.

77. In Estonia, a media campaign was recently launched, designed to reduce segregation within the labour market and the stereotyping that underlies it. Pupils about to make career choices were identified as an important target group and were encouraged to think outside the boundaries of gender stereotypes in deciding their future plans. The campaign centered around four individuals whose career choices were independent of conventional gender stereotyped choices. The objective was that these young people would act as role models for others. The press launch was held in a kindergarten classroom to highlight the importance of promoting a stereotyped and discrimination free environment from the earliest age onwards.

³² Eurostat

Syllabi, textbooks and teaching materials

78. The content of curricula may be determined at national or regional level in some countries but schools generally are free to choose the textbooks and materials used to deliver the curriculum. Textbooks at primary level are used to teach literacy and numeracy skills and generally include stories and illustrations which young children can identify with such as home life, community life, social outings etc. Many of these textbooks include stories and images which reflect a stereotyped portrayal of the activities and roles of women and men, boys and girls.

79. Teachers should be aware of the need to use textbooks and materials which reflect the reality of modern life, where roles undertaken by women and men may interchange and vary, and where the construction of the family of some children may not conform to the traditional family unit. Where gender role stereotyping is found in textbooks, teachers can use it to raise awareness of gender stereotyping and its negative effects on the lives of women and men and to teach children to challenge it when encountered.

80. In second-level education, textbooks and teaching materials are used by specialist teachers to deliver a syllabus. Teachers may not have a direct input into the content of the syllabus they are required to teach, but most countries now have mechanisms in place e.g. subject associations, to ensure that teachers can contribute their views concerning the content or other aspects of their specialist subject syllabi. Teachers therefore need to challenge a syllabus that excludes the contribution of females to the subject and they need to highlight and condemn textbooks and materials that portray women or men in a stereotyped manner or that use sexist language.

81. Twenty-eight countries in the Council of Europe survey indicated that they have held discussions or prepared guidelines for the authors and publishers of textbooks and materials to ensure that they do not include sex stereotyping and that they are inclusive of the contribution and scholarship of women as well as men.

82. In Romania, teachers have at their disposal a Compendium for the Gender Dimension in Education which provides a set of specific tools for self-evaluation and evaluation of educational institutions from the gender perspective, as well as a set of indicators for the evaluation of school books from the gender perspective. The compendium also provides a glossary with definitions of basic concepts relating to gender in education.

83. In Serbia, an analysis of primary and secondary school textbooks and curricula in terms of gender equality was conducted at national level and the results of the analysis were used to make recommendations for the inclusion of a gender perspective in educational materials for primary and secondary education, in accordance with the National Strategy for the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality (2009/2015).

Overall, results of investigations show, in general, a situation which is far from satisfactory. Women and men continue to be treated differently in many school books in European countries. Men are still more often represented than women; vocabulary is in contradiction with the principle of gender equality, the main characters are mostly male, women depicted have largely typically female jobs and are generally missing from the political and intellectual arena. Textbooks show stereotyped images of men and women and few can be said to tackle stereotypes or balance the representation of men and women, as various research projects have shown³³.

Hidden curriculum

84. The hidden curriculum which includes unwritten rules, casual remarks, language used in conversations, adults' assumptions, what students get rewarded or reprimanded for and all the other day-to-day experiences in school constitute a "hidden curriculum" with great power. The messages that are conveyed to pupils through the hidden curriculum influence their self-perceptions as well as their self-confidence.

85. The different experiences of girls and boys in schools and in particular in classroom interactions with teachers, convey subliminal but powerful messages which influence self-perceptions and self-confidence.

This type of gender bias is likely to be part of the hidden curriculum of lessons taught implicitly and generally unconsciously to pupils through the every day functioning of classroom interaction...pupils, when exposed to gender bias may be socialised, through years of schooling, to be silent and passive or aggressive and boisterous leading to distorted perceptions of gender roles embedded in teacher interactions with pupils.³⁴

86. Language, and the way it is used around the school by teachers and pupils, can play an important role in either reinforcing stereotypes or challenging them. Generally people have become more conscious of the language they use in relation to for example; race, culture, disability, but sex stereotyped and sexist language still persists, particularly in non-formal settings, in schools. Students in particular continue to use sexist language in conversations among themselves and with other members of the school community which often goes unchallenged.

87. The invisibility of sexist behaviour and language referred to earlier which form part of the hidden curriculum in schools, contributes to the perpetuation of gender stereotyping which in turn leads to gendered self-perceptions.

88. The power of the hidden curriculum should be highlighted by school authorities and mechanisms to counter its negative effects should be included in gender mainstreaming policies and practices. Of the forty-four countries that participated in the Council of Europe survey, only fourteen have prepared guidelines that address issues related to the hidden curriculum in schools, as part of a mainstreaming strategy.

³³ Gender Difference in Educational Outcomes, *Eurydice*, 2009

³⁴ Different Planets? Gender Attitudes and Classroom Practice in Post-Primary Teaching, *Caroline Renehan*, The Liffey Press, 2006

89. In Poland, a project *Girls and Boys: With No Fear, No Prejudice, No Violence* was implemented in 2006 by the *Towards the Girls Association*. As a result of the project, a set of scenarios was developed for equality lessons in lower secondary and upper secondary lyceum-type schools which cover issues such as conflicts, managing difficult emotions, communication, stereotypes and peer violence.

Extra curricular activities

90. Participation in extra curricular activities is a fundamental element of the education of young people and contributes to their social, physical and personal development. All pupils should have access to as wide a range of extra curricular activities as possible. Most schools provide a number of extra curricular activities which may include sports -team and individual, music, drama, debating, board games. Surveys in a number of countries have expressed concern about the lack of participation by girls in physical and sporting activities.

91. Most schools provide opportunities for boys to participate in a variety of sporting activities and provide resources and funding to support school teams to compete in events such as football leagues. Girls may not be afforded the same opportunities or provided with similar resources. As part of the gender mainstreaming process, schools should be required to examine their extra curricular programme and revise it if necessary, to ensure that all pupils have access to all activities. Resources should also be distributed fairly to support these activities. All achievements by pupils, whether team, individual or whole school, should also be celebrated equally. In the Council of Europe survey, less than half of the countries (18) have developed guidelines for schools that address extra curricular activities as part of the gender mainstreaming process.

Pupils' contribution to gender mainstreaming

92. Schools are generally hierarchical organisations with the principal/head teacher having most power and pupils the least. Pupils therefore may not have any formal means or mechanisms to communicate with school management or to contribute to the policies of the school. This structure of power is often challenged by pupils themselves as they question traditional forms of authority. In recent years, the need to hear pupils' voices and to include their concerns in the operation of schools has been recognised by education ministries and school authorities. In many countries schools are now either required or encouraged to establish student councils to formally represent the student body of the school.

93. Many countries have established national student councils or bodies and provide support for them. Part of this support may entail the development and provision of materials and guidelines on aspects of school life. In their research on equality and power in schools, Lynch and Lodge referred to pupils' lack of capacity and opportunity to name gender injustices. They found from essays written by pupils, that girls perceived gender inequality to be a bigger problem in their schools than did boys. They suggest however, that the lack of debate within schools about the dominating practices of relatively small numbers of boys in relation to other boys as well as girls suggests that dominance-driven definitions of masculinity have hegemonic status and that boys also lack the capacity and space to challenge them.

94. It is suggested that student councils/bodies can provide pupils with the mechanism to obtain the space and opportunity to highlight issues around gender

inequality and gender stereotyping (among other forms of stereotyping and inequality) and to contribute to the process of addressing these. In the Council of Europe questionnaire, countries were asked if the issue of gender equality had been included in materials prepared for student councils/bodies. Twenty-seven of the countries had not addressed this issue in preparing such materials.

Special needs of certain groups of boys and girls

95. As societies become more egalitarian, the recognition of the rights of all individuals, as identified by organisations such as the Council of Europe, have become enshrined in national laws. However, compliance with the requirements of such laws is difficult to establish and the experience by all individuals of their rights under the legislation is not always uniform.

96. Prejudice and stereotyping remain the principal obstacles to the achievement of equality of outcomes for all. However, in addition to these obstacles and despite policies of inclusiveness, the structures; operation; teaching provision; and predominant values of many schools have not changed to accommodate the diverse backgrounds and needs of some pupils.

97. Pupils from minority or ethnic groups as well as those with physical or intellectual disabilities or with special educational needs now have the right to attend mainstream education in most countries. They also have a right to expect to receive an education that provides them with opportunities to achieve to their potential. Girls, in particular, from minority groups may have very different educational needs to boys from the same groups. Schools should be aware of these needs and should make provision to address them. Only nine of the countries that responded to the Council of Europe questionnaire indicated that they have developed guidelines for schools to assist them in providing for the special needs of certain groups of pupils, as part of the gender mainstreaming process.

98. Serbia has adopted a series of regulations and strategy documents that present a framework for the education of Roma girls aimed at improving, *inter alia*, their education and training and promoting gender equality. Serbia is a member of the international initiative *Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)*.

Monitoring and evaluation

99. Monitoring and evaluation are at the core of gender mainstreaming strategies. To be effective however, indicators need to be developed to provide a consistency of approach, and to measure progress and compare outcomes. In the Council of Europe survey, only fifteen countries indicated that they had developed indicators for the evaluation of gender mainstreaming in schools.

100. Schools record a lot of information, particularly in relation to educational performance and achievement; drop-out rates; pupils' subject and programme choices; initial destination of past-pupils. However, the use made by schools of such information is not clear.

101. As part of the gender mainstreaming process schools could use this information to set targets, and to monitor and evaluate progress. Guidelines to assist them to develop their own indicators to measure progress should form part of the training programmes for school authorities and school personnel.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING THROUGHOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

102. All stakeholders have a responsibility to promote equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes for all pupils. In relation to gender equality, while progress has been made by way of legislation and in national educational policies, countries have not developed comprehensive strategies which target all stakeholders and focus on all aspects of school life. In claiming that gender equality is implicit in all school policies and practices as part of an overall equality mainstreaming approach, gender blindness and what is referred to as the 'evaporation' of gender equality are still evident in schools.

103. Lists of recommendations have been made by researches, included in formal reports and in legal instruments, but it would appear that social mindset still has some way to go. While specific actions have been undertaken in most European countries, in some more than others, progress in eliminating gender stereotyping and its consequences for all humans, males as well as females, remains slow. It is recognised that schools on their own cannot combat all the negative effects of gender stereotyping. Other social influences often operate in opposition to the equality objectives of education, for example; in sectors of the media, advertising, certain industries, youth-culture.

104. Nevertheless, schools play a significant role in socialising young people. How schools are structured, how they operate, the values they espouse, the curriculum they offer, the expectations they have of their pupils, the behaviour of school personnel and that permitted by pupils, the teaching and learning environment, the experience of pupils in the classroom and throughout the school, the textbooks and materials used; all contribute to either challenging gender and other forms of stereotyping, or perpetuating them. Strategies to promote gender equality throughout the education system must encompass all of these elements.

105. The *invisible* patriarchal paradigm which continues to operate in many educational establishments has profound implications for the life chances, experiences and outcomes of many individuals, men as well as women. It also has serious implications for countries' economic, political and social development.

106. The issues and consequences associated with gender stereotyping in education need to become more central in countries' development policies and plans as they face a future which requires the talents, skills and contributions of all citizens. Comprehensive strategies therefore are required to counter gender stereotyping and sexism which stubbornly persist despite a range of measures in countries. These strategies must include robust monitoring and evaluation. The negative effects of gender stereotyping and sexism on the lives of so many are too serious to await the very gradual changes which have occurred to date in the education systems in most countries. More urgent action is required.

Specific measures and gender mainstreaming

107. Most countries have developed and implemented initiatives to promote gender equality in education. Such initiatives can complement the gender mainstreaming process but they are not an alternative to it. When implemented as part of the mainstreaming process, they provide schools with ideas, activities, teaching materials and strategies which can enhance and support the process.

108. However, specific initiatives may not target all schools, and of those that are included, they may not involve the whole school community or target all sections of the school. On the other hand, gender mainstreaming encompasses every aspect of the school and involves all stakeholders. Gender mainstreaming necessitates engaging with gender equality issues throughout the life of the school. It is not something that is “added on” to existing practices but involves a transformation of the existing paradigms that inform education.

109. To ensure that gender mainstreaming is successfully implemented it is crucial that all stakeholders in the school understand the concept; are aware of gender equality issues; and recognise their responsibility to promote gender equality in all aspects of school life. Equally, the commitment of all who are part of the process and those who are influential in the implementation of the process is essential if success is to be realised.