

# Combating Gender Stereotypes in and through Education

Helsinki

10 October 2014

Maureen Bohan

# Conclusions

Main issues addressed:

- Definition and analysis of gender stereotyping
- The historical context in relation to the education of boys and girls
- Knowledge
- Complexity of outcomes and impact of the educational experiences for males and females
- Examples of good practice
- Role and influences of social media

# Gender Stereotyping

- Gender stereotyping begins from the minute a baby is born (often before)
- It's reinforced in the early years of a child's life (behaviour of parents, adults, society, toys, attitudes, interactions with others)
- Further reinforced throughout formal schooling for many children and young people (curricula; formal and informal, hidden curriculum, career guidance)
- Exists throughout the world to a greater or lesser degree

# Gender stereotyping

- Gender stereotyping is alive and well in 2014!
- Almost all Council of Europe member states have incorporated the principle of equality between men and women into national laws on education.
- Some other measures taken in most states, however schools are not the target of policies and programmes in the majority of cases

# Historical Context

- Influences of culture and beliefs on education of males and females. 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.
- Values and cultures deeply ingrained in European societies; males were considered the human norm and it was men's experience that determined how societies should be structured and it was their knowledge, constructed within the framework of a patriarchal paradigm of human society, that has been passed down through the generations.

# Knowledge

- What knowledge is included in curricula?
- Whose experiences and knowledge is passed down through the generations?
- Who decides on the content of school curricula?
- How are decisions made about who should study what?

# Gender Issues in History Teaching

- Mainly political and military history
- The experiences of middle class men (white)
- Token women
- Symbolic women

# Complexities of outcomes

- Girls' academic achievement/ boys' academic achievement. No consistent pattern (PISA report 2000)
- Male drop out rates
- Greater number of females progressing to higher education
- Courses taken in higher education
- Employment opportunities
- Pay gap
- Career advancement
- Leaky pipeline



# What is the purpose of education?

- Depends on the perspective and focus of the advisors and contributors to educational policies
- Economic development
- Development of knowledge and skills
- Social cohesion
- Personal development

# Purpose of education

- Gaps exist between the needs of rapidly changing societies and young people's preparation to work and live in those societies
- Are all young people being educated:
  - to work in new technological sectors?
  - to achieve personal fulfilment?
  - To share family responsibilities?
  - To contribute to society and local communities?

# Good Practice

Many examples of good practice and initiatives presented

- STEM promotion
- Gender proofing of textbooks, teaching materials
- The creation of gender aware school culture and a whole school approach to gender equality
- Initiatives aimed at parents
- Initiative to increase the number of males in early childhood education and care

# Issues

- It is clear from this conference and from recent research that gender equality has not been achieved in European states and it must continue to be addressed
- Gender stereotyping and sexism remain the greatest obstacles to the *de facto* achievement of gender equality
- Budgets for gender equality initiatives must not be allowed to be cut in times of economic downturn
- National Governments must face their obligations and implement the commitments to which they have signed up

# Preliminary Draft Recommendations\*

## **To Governments/regional/local authorities**

- Monitor and evaluate on a regular basis the implementation of national, regional and local gender equality policies.
- Promote and integrate gender mainstreaming into existing structures and policies at all levels of education.
- Promote gender proofing of all school policies.
- Develop indicators at national/regional level to monitor and evaluate the process of gender mainstreaming in schools.

*\*Conference report and recommendations are underway*

# Preliminary Draft Recommendations\*

## To Governments/regional/local authorities (cont.)

- Examine and revise school curricula to ensure that they are inclusive of the experiences and scholarship of all female and male citizens within and across societies.
- Introduce mandatory relationship and sexuality education throughout primary and second level education.
- Endorse an emphasis on human rights to permeate core subjects on school curricula.

*\*Conference report and recommendations are underway*

# Preliminary Draft Recommendations\*

## **To educational training providers: professional bodies**

- Promote the inclusion of a gender perspective in all aspects of all teacher pre-service and in-service training courses and school management personnel courses.
- Put in place policies and incentives to encourage girls to study science and technology subjects in school and to pursue higher level STEM courses and careers in these areas.
- Put in place initiatives to encourage more males to become involved in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

*\*Conference report and recommendations are underway*

# Preliminary Draft Recommendations\*

## **To relevant public authorities: relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**

- Organise awareness-raising campaigns to inform and educate young people and parents about the powerful influence of social media as a tool for communication and progress.
- Raise awareness of the links between gender stereotyping and bullying, cyber bullying and violence against women.

*\*Conference report and recommendations are underway*



# Preliminary Draft Recommendations\*

## **To schools: local stakeholders**

- Review school policies and practices on a cyclical basis, as part of self-evaluation, to ensure that gender mainstreaming is being fully implemented throughout schools and educational establishments.
- Monitor practices (formal and informal) on an on-going basis to ensure that all stakeholders are sensitised to the issues associated with the gender mainstreaming process.
- Work closely with parents to raise awareness about issues related to gender equality and encourage parents' contribution to schools' gender mainstreaming processes.
- Educate all children and young people to understand the consequences of cyber bullying, some forms of which are due to gender stereotyping.

*\*Conference report and recommendations are underway*

# Preliminary Draft Recommendations\*

## To international organisations

- Support states in complying with their commitment to promote gender mainstreaming throughout their respective educational systems.
- Provide exemplar templates, questionnaires, indicators, methodologies.
- Disseminate successful initiatives and examples of good practice widely throughout member states.
- Monitor progress in states on a regular basis.

*\*Conference report and recommendations are underway*