

Stereotyping Index for Schools

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This paper gives guidance to schools who are interested in measuring the overall gender stereotyping at their school, in order to make improvements year on year. For various reasons, this measure is not transferrable between schools, but offers a useful overview of an individual school's performance.

Background

Work done by the Institute of Physics entitled Opening Doors has established that in order to encourage more girls to take STEM subjects at Key Stage 5 (and physics in particular) – where currently only 35% of girls continue with STEM compared to 97% of boys - the school has to improve its performance across all of its subjects. So, in schools where girls don't choose STEM, there is an equal chance that boys will not choose traditionally 'female' subjects such as Art and English. This is due – amongst other things - to inadequate challenge of gender and occupational stereotyping and often a general lack of awareness of the problem.

Proposal

In order to identify where stereotyping exists – and to find a way of measuring it, a very simple calculation is possible which plots the percentages of girls taking A level subjects in descending (or ascending) order, as can be seen in Figure 1. From the plot, a straight line of best fit can be drawn, the gradient of which is effectively the school's Stereotyping Index. Figure 1 shows the UK national average for numbers of students taking the subjects shown, so schools will be able to assess whether they are above or below the national average, and judge their performance with a view to making improvements.

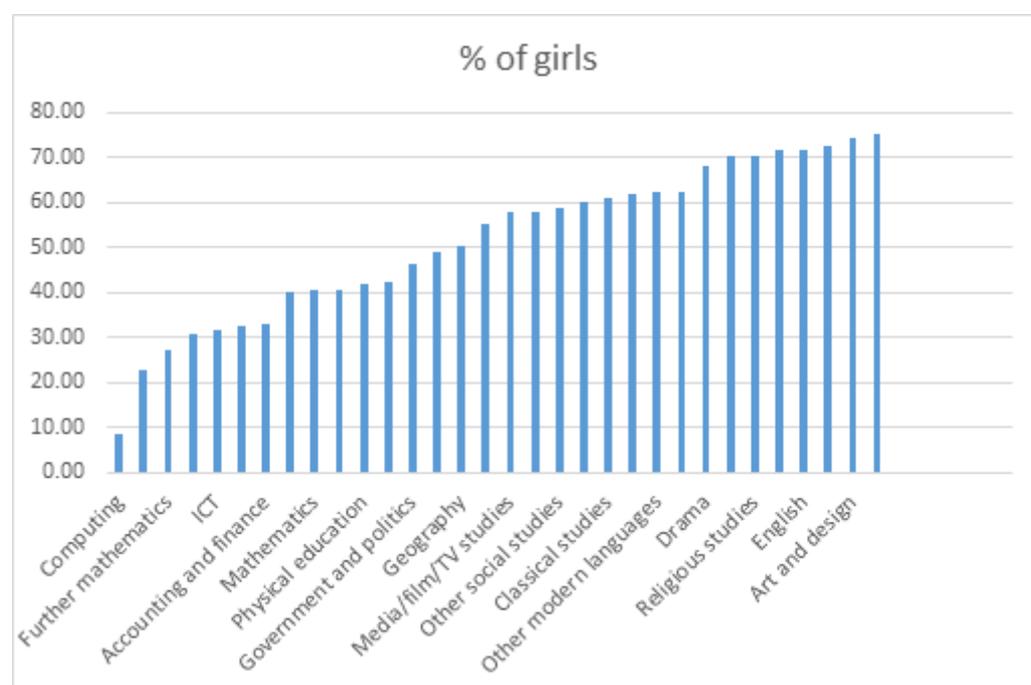


Figure 1. Plot of percentage of girls taking the given subjects at A level. UK National Average 2017.

The reason why A level subjects are chosen is that boys and girls take GCSEs in roughly even numbers, so it is only at A level that gender stereotyping becomes apparent. Obviously, there will be

many schools whose results will be skewed because they don't teach particular subjects at A level, (for example in Computing where the national average is only 8.3% female, the inclusion of this would give a 'worse' index than in those schools who do not teach Computing), so the stereotyping indices won't necessarily be translatable across schools, but nevertheless they will give an indication. This may well be all that is needed for schools to notice that they have a problem, and put measures in place to improve it.

Linking the index to Ofsted could well be the lever that some schools need to address these issues.

In order to address these issues, the Institute of Physics offer the following guidance:

OPENING DOORS PRINCIPLES (Institute of Physics)

1. The School Leadership Team is fully committed to an evidence-based approach to combat gender inequality across the school, involving parents, governors and teachers at all levels.

a. Organisation and framework

- i. The head teacher and the school leadership team (SLT) are visibly committed to combatting gender inequality
- ii. Staff time spent on diversity issues is formally recognised
- iii. The SLT includes a dedicated diversity champion
- iv. Governors and parents are fully engaged
- v. There is a Diversity and Inclusion Committee with participation from all levels
- vi. Clear procedures are in place for training NQTs and new staff in the school's equality approach
- vii. Recognition is given to the intersection of gender with other forms of inequality

b. Monitoring and evidence base

- i. The school collects and monitors data on pupil participation, performance and destinations by gender
- ii. Data are monitored for all subjects and compared with national benchmarks and benchmarks for similar schools
- iii. The school monitors participation by gender in extra-curricular activities such as school trips and outside-hours clubs

2. Gender discrimination and sexist behaviour are considered as unacceptable as their racist and homophobic equivalents and both staff and students are made aware of the relevant issues

a. Acceptable behaviour and environment

- i. School has a well-publicised code of behaviour, which includes gender issues
- ii. Sexist behaviour and language are considered unacceptable and there are clear, widely-known procedures in place for addressing occurrences
- iii. The school environment (displays, posters, communications, etc.) values diversity

b. Training and awareness raising

- i. All staff are trained on gender and equality issues including unconscious bias
- ii. Staff are aware that treating all students in the same way does not constitute equality of treatment
- iii. PSHE activities, assemblies etc. are used to raise awareness of gender and equality issues with students at all levels
- iv. Staff express high, non-stereotypical expectations for all students
- v. Through their pedagogy, teachers find ways to value the diverse lives, experiences and identities of students so they feel a sense of belonging and can appreciate the relevance of curricula to their current and future lives

- 3. The school is aspirational in its approach to equality of opportunity and achievement with a curriculum that strives to be gender equitable**
 - a. Actions and initiatives**
 - i. Curricula and schemes of work are designed to be gender equitable
 - ii. Initiatives to improve gender balance are based on the best available evidence
 - iii. Actions and initiatives are critically evaluated and the results shared across the school
 - iv. Good practice is shared across all subjects
 - v. Students are actively encouraged to consider subject areas outside their gender stereotype
 - b. Opportunities and achievement**
 - i. Routes to employment are included as part of subject curricula and presented in a gender equitable fashion
 - ii. Using benchmark data, realistic aspirational targets are set for improving gender balance in participation, achievement and progression across subject areas
- 4. Students are at the heart of activities and actions to combat gender inequality**
 - a. Student representation**
 - i. Student representatives are included on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee
 - ii. There is active student involvement in initiatives
 - iii. All students are encouraged to provide input to campaigns, for example, to counter sexist language
 - b. Student involvement**
 - i. All students are encouraged to take ownership of gender and inequality issues and to develop their own activities
 - ii. Senior students act as mentors for younger students to help break down stereotypical attitudes
 - iii. Students act as ambassadors to primary schools to help counter the early development of stereotypical attitudes
- 5. All advice to students and their parents concerning careers and personal development is provided in a way to counter inequalities and stereotypes**
 - a. Careers advice and personal development**
 - i. Careers advice and guidance is personalised to the individual student
 - ii. Careers education (information, advice and guidance) challenges traditional gender stereotypes
 - iii. The school provides support and works collaboratively with parents to challenge stereotypical views
 - iv. Steps are taken to ensure that work experience does not reinforce existing inequalities
 - v. Participation in careers education is monitored by gender
 - b. Subject choice**
 - i. All published materials, for example on choice of post-16 study are gender equitable
 - ii. All subjects presented as equally challenging/accessible
 - iii. School timetables do not block subjects according to perceived gender interest

Links

Opening Doors, Institute of Physics

http://www.iop.org/education/teacher/support/girls_physics/opening-doors/page_63803.html