
Women in Leadership Weekend – 17 October

Questions for Gary Kennedy

Questions directed at Gary Kennedy:

- 1. Gary, the enablers you recommend call for a change in the way teachers view gender balance. How would you encourage teachers to embrace and promote gender balance, especially when encouraging students to explore societal roles and career option that traditionally were not viewed as possibilities?**

Thank you for the question. We are very strong supporters of the role Teachers play in preparing for more gender equal communities, workplaces and ultimately society. We believe this can be influenced in two ways: -

1. Children are not born with bias, set gender role behaviours or stereotypical attitudes, instead they develop them very quickly based on their surroundings, their peer behaviours and those of the adults that they interact with. We believe that part of the teacher training curriculum, both initial and ongoing, should include sensitivity training on the impact of teacher behaviours in either reinforcing traditional, or creating new, gender stereotypical behaviours. More gender-neutral focus on rituals, tasks, forms of address, approaches to problem solving, provide teachers with the opportunity to create new thinking within their students, and by extension, with their parents. The panel might be interested in a piece of work that highlighted the benefits of such thinking in helping young children, boys and girls, in challenging their own already developed traditional views on their capabilities. The work was featured in a BBC documentary entitled 'No more Girls and Boys – gender neutral classrooms' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wN5R2LWhTrY>; and we believe exposure to some thinking in this area would genuinely benefit teachers in their ambition to support all their pupils.
2. The education path for teachers is typically, school – college – school, with any work experience placements also based within the education system; therefore there are no opportunities for teachers to experience the world of business, and the changing roles and opportunities in a modern commercial workplace. Within the 30% Club we are very proud to be founding partners on the Dublin City University (DCU) Stem teacher internship programme, where trainee teachers within the STEM discipline are provided with an extra -curricular opportunity to spend a summer placement within industry. The placements are offered by 30% Club sponsor organisations in partnership with CWiT, (connecting women in technology). This placement provides the trainee teacher with an opportunity to see where STEM subjects translate into business deliverables which can then assist them in developing their teaching style, understanding roles and competencies used within the workplace in non-traditional careers and directing students, particularly girls, to the value of STEM subjects as college options. . We believe that this approach should be
 - Captured as core curriculum for all STEM teachers rather than a voluntary off-term addition
 - Extended to all trainee teacher programmes countrywide
 - In particular, we believe it is essential that this practical experience be mandatory for all Career Guidance Teacher Training, and would suggest further that a placement in industry, or access to industry learning sessions should be a regular requirement for Career Guidance Teachers as part of their continued professional development

We were delighted to support the team in DCU in their application for a grant from Science Foundation Ireland, to extend the programme. Further details are available on the DCU website <https://www.dcu.ie/news/2020/oct/dcu-launches-2021-stint-programme-inspire-innovative-learning-stem-education>

Questions directed at the panel as a whole:

2. How specifically can we support minority groups in greater representation? How should career guidance be restructured to overcome gender inequality?

As we said in our submission on the day greater representation is driven by pipeline, and that pipeline starts at schools, it broadens into making the workplace more accessible for everyone through integrated planning and supporting, and then ultimately into representation in roles of influence whether in business or public life. In our submission we focused on gender, but we continue to stress that gender is a majority issue rather than a minority issue, and if we can focus on all women not just specific groups or classes of women, this helps us to cross into minority groups and provide support in the same way.

The impact of career guidance on subject and career choice could be significantly enhanced for all students and, in particular for girls, by re-designing the approach to guidance. We recognise that resource constraints in this area have severely impacted on the development of the service currently available in schools. Despite the dedication of teachers and guidance professionals, our current service level and structures do not always meet the modern needs of students, parents or our rapidly evolving economy and society.

Consider establishing a service to schools, rather than a service in schools. Rather than career guidance teachers in each school, we would instead recommend a regional/cluster approach with a service provided to several schools by multi-disciplinary experienced specialist teams. This regional approach would further professionalise the role of career guidance, facilitate a broader-based service meeting more varied needs, level the playing field for schools in more disadvantaged areas, and provide a focus for school/local industry partnerships to further foster knowledge and career awareness, as well as partnerships with apprenticeship, further education and higher education programmes.

Particularly a more efficient approach could focus on

- The skills and competencies of the workplace of the future v traditional roles
- Removing Unconscious Bias – particularly bias influencing subject choices for secondary and post-secondary education
- The focus on lifelong learning
- Educating students on how they access business and partnership resources
- Working with primary caregivers, parents predominantly, to ensure they can also support students in making decisions which are critical to their futures

3. Do the speakers feel that we will just get quotas filled so we can tick the box and say well we have done that, got the quota filled but have we got the people we need to carry out the tasks?

This is a question that we have considered in relation to women on boards and has driven our support for targets rather than quota's. In the corporate world, there is a considerable amount of evidence that gender quotas for boards may deliver immediate results but may not bring about the systemic changes required, with a tendency to drive short term change and for the situation

to regress once the quotas are lifted. For example, Norway introduced a 40% quota for boards of listed companies in 2006. The quota was reached by companies, but the side effects were counterproductive. Several companies delisted before the legislation was introduced and a small number of women were appointed to several boards. This does not expand the actual number of women at Board level.

Additionally, in the rush to meet the quotas, companies no longer focused on the pipeline of women coming up through the organisation, or addressing existing barriers and structural discrimination, which is the key to sustainable success. The Norwegians own studies showed that eight years after Norway introduced the law on gender equality in boardrooms, there were no female CEOs in the country's 60 largest companies. There was also no data to demonstrate higher pay or more career advancing opportunities for most women in the workforce. Thus, having more women on the board because of quotas had done little to benefit women in the workforce, even though it had changed the picture at board level.

We wait to see whether the use of targets rather than quotas will improve systemic behaviour and at minimum target setting is within the control of the organisation which would suggest greater internal impetus to change.

However, we do recognise that when all voluntary methods are failing, targets and quotas can add value in providing a step change in representation, and the end result can add value where it is done well and where it raises the bar for future progress. In considering applying quotas we would support the idea of

- Framing the policy in a positive way.
- Make structural discrimination visible - perceiving a group to be underrepresented does not lead to stronger support for targets or quotas; instead, demonstrate the discrimination that exists against the targeted group.
- Look at structural barriers to entry – but also look at the structural barriers to remaining
- Highlight the importance of merit. People generally dislike the idea of others being selected solely on the basis of their status and if merit-based criteria are not emphasised, people assume that they are non-existent, leading to negative outcomes such as stigmatisation of the target group BUT ensuring the definition of 'merit' does not include inherent bias
- Involve those who don't benefit from the policy in its development – and think about what is the most important outcome e.g. is it about changing the numbers quickly (then quotas work well), is it about changing the culture so that numbers can be achieved and sustained (then targets work well), is it about ensuring that nobody views the process as tokenism – both male and female – then it's about process and messaging, as much as measurement

4. What do they believe is required at grass roots level to increase female participation and how do they see this being supported by the population as a whole?

There are so many different things that can be done, and we look forward to the suggestions from the group. Our key areas of focus are

- Raising awareness – continued focus on the conversation, making role models visible, including it as part of the agenda as well as an agenda for action in its own right
- Talent pipeline – focus through education, career development, interchangeable skills, lifelong learning

- Access – removing barriers to work, improving support systems for areas such as childcare, retraining, returners programmes. Equal focus on retention as well as attraction

However, more fundamentally we support greater progress on how things are done, as much as what is done. We believe that there should be continued and greater partnership between business and policy makers, greater cross functional approaches within government departments, and availing of opportunities for the public service to be a role model for change as the majority employer in the state.

- 5. Not sure who to address this to, how to ensure greater participation in leadership in public and private life (e.g. politics and sport)...providing opportunity and supporting access is one thing (e.g. targets, quotas etc), but women remain on the 'lower' participation levels once they're in (as explained in the Women in Sport and Women for Election presentations). Do funding-linked quotas exist where they progressively track women's participation and leadership over time and throughout the organisation? e.g. if a NGB of a sporting organisation achieves the 30% or 40% Board participation level for women; can the quota-linked funding contract be altered to move women from coaching at amateur levels to elite levels? Would something like this be possible for all publicly funded orgs?**

This is an interesting question that we have considered from the perspective of the business community. We see similar outcomes where companies focus on just diversity – greater balance in the company demographics, and inclusion – all voices being welcomed and heard. However, the more challenging aspect is the third pillar of D,I & I, the pillar of Influence – and that's ensuring that there is better balance in the roles of Influence, and the voices that drive change. That is why within the agendas for Balance for Better Business, and the 30% Club, while we focus on the pipeline as our general theme, the need for balance at the most senior levels is our key driver. For now we operate in Ireland on the basis that delivering on such targets is voluntary, but in other European countries where a quota is put in place, then there is no funding link to quota delivery, but rather a financial consequence (listed companies are required to delist) for those that don't comply

An example that the committee might want to learn more about, where funding is linked to gender progress, is the Athena Swan Framework set out by the Higher Education Authority, which operates in the manner suggested by the question. <https://hea.ie/policy/gender/athena-swan/>, and has been driving significant action across the third level sector.

Gary Kennedy
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