

Women in Leadership Weekend – 17 October

Questions for Lynne Cantwell

- 1. Lynne, at what pace do you believe equality should practically happen, and how would this develop in sports that are , at least now , dominated by either girls/women or boys/men ?**

It's very hard to calculate pace when we lack previous examples. We are working on including case studies and the business case for more gender diverse boards in the resource that we are producing, 'Gender Diversity on Boards Toolkit'. However, excuses and myths too often dictate actions, or lack of. If sporting bodies outlined clear KPIs for themselves, and measures they intend to instil then at least you could track this. Then providing personnel to work with those sporting bodies to assist them in implementing measures would direct and speed up the process.

At a board level in sport, we believe there exists a handful of categories describing where sports are at from a board balance point of view for example. Some sports have very low gender representation on their board and don't know how to change it and don't want to. Some sports have very low gender representation, do know how and don't want to change it. There are plenty of varieties to this narrative and all will take a different approach to reach an equality target.

I think being selective and targeted with our emerging female talent is important to ensure we give them the best chance to succeed. They will serve to be good examples of what's possible. Eg. Board room, senior roles etc. Depending on how long these take to get funding and develop, I would hope a 3-5 yer plan is possible to develop case studies to develop stronger and larger actions on.

We've seen in the media that change can occur quickly with targets, e.g. Swedish TV moving to 50% male/female coverage in a short space of time.

- 2. Is safety & security concerns and the support structures required adequate?**

I don't think this is an issue. Regarding support structures however, there is a growing body of evidence of the value of mentoring for female leadership &

talent. Female's need support to grow and maintain confidence to actualise their ambition and progress through the pathways.

3. Are women interested in seeking paid managerial roles in professional sporting bodies here in Ireland? Are the same terms and conditions apply currently to male and female management roles in Ireland presently? Are women who currently work in professional sporting bodies treated respectfully?

We have not done any research on this to accurately say yes/no. However, I would say, yes, women are interested in paid managerial roles in professional sporting bodies (both executive managerial roles and that of team environment). Regarding terms and conditions, we cannot say as we have not looked at contracts that might be awarded. Again though, to the best of my knowledge, women seem to be treated respectfully if working in professional sport.

On a side note, women tend to get the admin or managerial roles in sport, i.e. away from the coaching. They tend to look after the logistical side of things. Within sporting bodies, there are a lack of women CEO's, COO's, Director positions, Head of positions and Performance Directors. Recently New Zealand launched a Women in Senior Sports Professions initiative called a Residency Fund where the government funded a \$2.7million project to place 18 women into senior roles across all the sports in NZ for 3 years. The rationale was that female need to in those senior positions and recruitment blockers hinder this as well as no having the experience hinders them. This initiative was specifically targeting this space which I believe is one way of addressing an important gap in the system.

4. Lynne Cantwell has represented Ireland 87 times on the rugby field. As a viewer of international women's rugby, I appreciate the role that television coverage can play in raising awareness of and participation in sport that television can have, and I enjoy raising my daughter with this outlook. I would like to learn Ms Cantwell's opinion on the place of sport in early child education and socialisation.

I think sport provides an opportune platform to teach younger people about gender equality alongside diversity & inclusion. Our social and behavioural framework and norms are created at home, in early learning by our parents, teachers, brothers & sisters. If our parents dress boys in blue and girls in pink, give trucks to boys and dolls to girls and play football with boys and ballet with girls these stereotypes will strongly influence a child's perception of what gender they should be.

Equally if a child is brought up seeing their mum exercising, girls playing and coaching sport on tv, commentating and analysing games as equals to men then girls will think this is possible and aspire to be that if they wish and also boys will think it's normal too and be less likely to try inhibit girls from being involved in sport as much and as an equal to them.

PE is not a subject taught in our Primary schools which is a grave threat to how children's sport's education is shaped. Positive exposure of sports in schools seems a natural way to positively shape children's relationship with school in their early years.