Target audience: Teacher trainers, gender trainers

Gender and sex are not the same. The analysis and discussion of the following statements can help understand and raise awareness about the differences between them.

Think if the following statements are based on our perception of gender roles or sex differences.

1. Most women give birth to babies; men do not.
2. “Girls are gentle; boys are rough.”
3. In all OECD countries, median wages for men are higher than those for women. The average difference is more than 15%, and exceeds 20% in several countries.²⁴
4. Most women can breast-feed babies; men can bottle-feed babies.
5. Most construction workers in Asia are men.
6. Most men’s voices break at puberty; women’s do not.
7. According to UN statistics, women do 40% of the world’s work.²⁵ In a majority of countries, women’s wages represent between 70% and 90% of men’s wages.²⁶
8. A girl gets expelled from school for being pregnant, while the boy who impregnated her is neither judged nor expelled.
9. Boys learn to do the same work as their fathers, and girls learn to do the same work as their mothers.

²³ Part of the statements reported here are adapted from the Gender Training Manual, Oxfam, 1994
²⁴ http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/19/14/38172488.pdf
Comments

1. “Women give birth to babies; men do not.”
   This is a physical attribute based on biological differences between women and men.

2. “Girls are gentle; boys are rough.”
   These are assumptions based on cultural beliefs.

3. “In all OECD countries, median wages for men are higher than those for women.”
   This situation persists based on societal practices. Almost all OECD countries legislate to ensure equal pay for equal work regardless of being a woman or a man, but there are all sorts of reasons why this is insufficient to close the gender gap. Discrimination may continue if legislation is not or cannot be applied. More generally, women may end up in lower-paid occupations than men, and may struggle to be promoted as often as men.

4. “Most women can breast-feed babies…”
   This is a physical attribute based on a sexual difference between women and men.

5. “Most construction workers in Asia are men.”
   The proportion of women in some sectors may be low due to traditional representations of women’s roles – these sectors are seen as more ‘masculine.’

6. “Most men’s voices break at puberty, women’s do not.”
   This is a physical attribute based on a sexual difference between women and men.

7. “According to UN statistics, women do 40% of the world’s work…”
   This is another example of the consequences of unequal perceptions of the roles attached to women. Throughout most regions and many occupations, women are paid less money than men for the same job.

8. “A girl gets expelled from school for being pregnant…”
   Girls can suffer from unequal treatment based on their status in society.

9. “Boys learn to do the same work or job as their fathers…”
   Societies can have different expectations about boys’ and girls’ likely behaviours.