

Good girls make better students than boys essay example

[Countries](#), [England](#)



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Introduction

It is not surprising to know that girls are better students than boys. From common knowledge, this is now a statistically proved claim in most parts of the world, including the United Kingdom. There have been numerous studies undertaken in the past few decades that have focused on this question, and nearly all the results point to the same conclusion: as far as school education is concerned, girls outperform (always have) boys. The aim of this paper is to analyze some of these studies, their methodologies, and the corresponding results, from the perspective of theories in education.

Though the system of education varies from country to country, studies have shown that they all have some common aspects. And these factors play a major role in comparing the performances of girls and boys in the same educational environment. This does not mean that the standard of education

is comparable across the globe; it simply implies that within a particular system, girls outperform boys in the classroom. In other words, though the results are similar, the reference itself is different in every system.

Background

Before analyzing how girls and boys fair in the classroom in United Kingdom, it would prove useful to talk about the essential features of the education system in the United Kingdom.

Across the United Kingdom, school education consists of 5 stages: early years, primary, secondary, FE (Further Education), and HE (Higher Education). In Northern Ireland, education is mandatory for all children the age group of 5 – 16. FE and HE are however, not compulsory.

The United Kingdom's approach to assessment and evaluation includes a central control over policy-making and standard setting; an improved responsibility for the implementation of assessment of faculty and also of schools; transparency in the evaluation procedures and how they are reported; and again a central control over effective implementation. Schools have their own Board of Governors, which is expected to take charge of the school's quality of education. Towards this end, the Board is required to continuously supervise and report the school's performance to the community. This is part of the aforementioned central control for school development and planning (Rosenkvist, 2010).

Apart from the Board, the Department of Education also regularly monitors schools' performance and progress through its Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Teachers play a pivotal role in student evaluation as well

as in providing with information vital for keeping things in check at the system level.

As far as primary education is concerned, the center is responsible for setting evaluation standards and in aiding teachers in assessing a student's progress. It is also important to monitor teachers' assessment of students, to keep the middle level in check. This is done with the help of the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). An external examination system is responsible for taking care of evaluation of students at the end of the mandatory education period. There could be monitored exceptions to this however, based on the policies of the school.

In order to understand to fully understand the reasons for disparities in the performance levels of boys and girls, it is essential to identify and analyze the inherent factors in the system that maybe responsible for directly or indirectly affecting a particular gender. And in order to do this, the key features of the education system need to be discussed, which is done in the subsequent section.

Key Features of the Education System in the United Kingdom

1. An overall high standard in primary schools and constant recorded progress in those schools with challenges: Reports show that the majority of students' performance in most primary schools is high, meaning they are benefiting from it. However, for over a fifth of the students, especially in schools those are not financially and socially as well-off, there are persistent hurdles in crossing the average benchmark.

2. Skills in par with international standards as far as reading and

mathematics are concerned, at the primary level: It was established that Year 6 students from Ireland could exhibit excellent reading and mathematics skills. Similarly many studies concerned with the performance of primary students in these two areas, in comparison with global standards show that children from the United Kingdom are as good if not better. However, comparing the achievements of girls and boys within the UK itself, girls enjoy a clear lead in reading, while they are almost on par with boys with respect to mathematics.

3. Drastic changes in results in post-primary education: As much as primary education results are highly positive, post-primary education performance results deteriorate rapidly. Though there has been an improvement in this trend in the recent past, challenges in establishing equity have continued to be pronounced. For instance, in a study conducted in 2009, it was revealed that the average performance and the fraction of top performing students were just about the OECD average (DENI, 2011).

Further, performances no longer compare to international benchmarks, and fall in the average category. Research so far indicates that socio-economic factors are the most important in determining the performance of a student in post-primary education. This in turn governs a pupil's state of mind, motivation to study, and the effort taken for improvement. As far as gender is concerned, the difference in performance levels between girls and boys is seen to increase (with girls performing better). This could be because boys in this age group are more vulnerable to societal influences (Tamassia and Adams, 2009).

Figure 1 gives a sample comparison of how socio-economic status influences

performance in different place.

Figure 1: Relationship between socio-economic status and performance

4. As far as gender factor is concerned, a study conducted in Northern Ireland showed that boys and girls are on par as far as mathematics is concerned. Further, 24% of the overall students could perform even the most difficult tasks in mathematics at their level and were given the “ advanced benchmark”.

Similarly, another science assessment that was conducted in 2011 (TIMSS), Year 6 pupils were asked to perform some tasks that could prove their understanding and skills in Science. While they performed much above the international average, there was not much of a difference in the performance of girls and boys. Also, an almost equal fraction of girls and boys were given the “ advanced benchmark” status. This is contrary to the areas of reading and mathematics, where the overall proportion as well as that of boys, were relatively less (CBI, 2012).

The Education System

As far as the system of education is concerned, rote learning was common in many regions, even till a few decades back. However, this trend has been changing quickly. People no longer emphasize on memory being the most important factor for evaluating the knowledge of students. During this phase, it was established that in general, girls are able to better memorize when compared to boys, resulting in the former performing better. A little more insight into the concept of memory in the education system could prove helpful.

The three main stages of memory process are encoding, storing and retrieval. Essentially, learning is the ability to change information already available, based on new inputs. These inputs may be in the form of information, facts, opinions or experiences. True, when we hear a phone number, we can only remember it for a few seconds, but the process of learning in school is not based on such short term memory techniques. When our biological sensors send signals to our brains based on stimuli, it is held in our memory, but only momentarily. When we are able to extract some meaning from an input, and make a conscious effort to pay attention to it, we reach working memory. There is then a consideration to transfer this into a long-term memory (permanent). This happens when there is repeated and continuous learning. The consistency in the learning process decides the amount of retention.

Given that even with systems evolving and moving away from rote learning, girls seem to continue performing better. This tells us that memory is not the key factor contributing to the result. However, memory is still an integral part of the education system, and it is quite possible that the concentration span for girls is on average higher than that of boys. And as explained above, this results in differences in effective learning (Looney, 2011).

In an international study conducted, it was shown that in over 70% of the world girls out-perform boys in almost every subject. In fact, this is contrary to the popular belief that boys are better in mathematics and science and girls only excel in languages. The study revealed that even in mathematics and science, girls perform better, and have been doing so in the past one century! However, the difference in performance levels is very less in these

subjects, when compared to reading and languages.

In the previous section, it was mentioned that socio-economic factors play an important role in determining the performance of students. However, research shows that this is not a contributing factor towards performance disparities based on gender. In fact, girls in all spheres of the society seem to perform better than boys in the corresponding classes.

The mind is the main reason for a person's success or failure. Though the mind is generally associated with an individual, it is well known that gender-based mindsets do exist. The way a girl's mind works is often quoted as being very different from the way a boy thinks. So is the education system somehow favoring the female mindset?

Experts say that with respect to attitude (again related with the mind); girls generally tend to understand concepts while boys are more exam-oriented. This seems contradictory to the results discussed so far. But the point is, in the long run, concepts result in performance, rather than a last-minute struggle to finish the portions for an exam.

Studies

In crude terms, study results taken from schools generally present the real student examination/evaluation reports, along with detailed information about the school. The latter may include ground level information about the candidates who participated in the study, such as their gender, age, socio-economic condition, etc. At present, the database consists of information in a set of tables with following example categories: pupil, teacher, enrolment, address, religion, key stage, ethnicity and finance (Morris, 2011).

A simple modification could be done by presenting the key stage results along with the details of the number of students who have access to free school meals, which might be an influencing factor. Also, fraction of boys and girls, and performance in relative terms as well as absolute terms is essential for the purpose of analysis.

As far as school context adjustments are concerned, this would generally include showing a regression model analysis which determines how various student characteristics and/or factors associated to the community relate with student performance.

For instance, Sweden utilizes a weighted indicator of parents' education, the number of pupils born abroad, fraction of boys, fraction of boys that were born in Sweden but with parents born outside Sweden. Similarly, Australia considers occupation of individual students, parental education, a set of school-community indices such as remoteness of the school, fraction of indigenous students, problems faced by students with English as a second language, and so on.

Taking the example of Northern Ireland, a lot of information is made available, including school intake, student attendance rates, enrolment, fraction of students with special educational requirements, fraction of students with access to free school meals, the size of the school, the number of newcomers, and number of faculty (Santiago, et. al, 2012).

Performance does not imply Intelligence

It is important to keep in mind that performance discussed so far, are merely based on tools created by the education system to evaluate students'

understanding of subjects. This does not in any way measure the “intelligence” of students, which is a misgiving of the present system and the society. A child’s ability to think and question develops at a very young age. Kids of two or three are unprejudiced, and what they learn at that age can go on to stay as their perceptions for life. So, it is important to encourage and support a child’s curiosity, to bring out his/her originality and creative skills. Communication is an essential part of human civilization. Different regions in the world developed at different time periods with respect to communication, and with different factors influencing them. In spite of all the diversity in the style, medium, cultural significance, and so on, people across the globe have managed to keep relations intact - they have found ways to bridge the gap in their communicating abilities.

With globalization especially, the world has become a cultural mix, and inter-cultural communication is one of the foremost aspects concerning international events and organizations. In terms of communication, girls have again been better, in the context of measuring how open they are with teachers, and in effectively expressing their needs. This could be a major factor that eases their academic efforts.

Finally, Internet skills play an important role in the performance of students. It has been observed that boys are more comfortable with the computer and find it easier to use the Internet. This could be both a boon and a bane. Experts say that performance of boys have come down since the advent of the Internet; it has proven to be a source of distraction rather than a reservoir of knowledge.

Conclusion

Methods of learning are important in understanding the outcomes of education. It points to possible reasons for deviation of results from what is expected. Memory, attitude towards learning, vulnerability to external influences and motivation can be thought of as the key factors that result in girls performing better than boys in school. Motivation stems from deep rooted attachment to family, whose aspirations become important to girls more than they matter to boys.

Studies in different parts of the United Kingdom have used different measures for analyzing student performance. For instance, as mentioned before, Northern Ireland has the factor of access to free school meals as a major pointer to account for school context in performance evaluation.

The OECD team has recognized simple means to further clarify the methods by including more detailed information on which free school meal entitlement band category the particular school falls into, reporting more regularly the gender comparison information in the inspection reports, and keeping the database regularly updated. Further, it is important that the Department of Education gives extra consideration to further strengthening report on equity; maybe this can again be achieved by including comparative data on the fraction of boys and students with special educational needs (Shewbridge, et. Al, 2012).

In conclusion, the main aim of the Department of Education is to handle the underachievement of boys in schools, by means of an advertising campaign that intends to appeal more men to get into the teaching profession. The Department of Education has already put up a publicity campaign about

parents motivating their children and setting high ambitions for them. The narrative has been to tackle the “Poverty of Aspiration”, which might be a good long-term solution.

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