Gender Segregation, Apprenticeship and the Raising of the Participation Age: are young women at a disadvantage?

Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin

LLAKES Seminar, 13 November 2013
Background and Context

- Youth unemployment
- Raising of the participation age (RPA)
- Static staying-on rate at approx. 70%
- Persistent gender segregation in vocational pathways and apprenticeship, and labour market
- Females under-represented in work-based route, over-represented in FT education route
- Concern that RPA reinforces or exacerbates imbalances
Women and the LM

- Gender imbalance across sectors
- Gender pay gap
- Females as ‘reserve’ workforce
- Public sector cuts, women and training
Government-supported Apprenticeship

• History (across the economy, males/females)

• Current provision (level 2, 3, 4+)

• Key policy issues (social and economic goals, quantity and quality)

• Gender and age profile
Apprenticeship and gender segregation

- Male dominated sectors associated with better pay, training, qualification currency and career progression
- % of males increasing slowly in some service sectors (e.g. health & social care by 3% (17%), business admin by 6% (25%), retail by 9% (43%))
- % of females tiny and static in male dominated sectors (engineering 3%, construction 2%, plumbing 2%, IT professional 10%)
- % of males static (9%) in female dominated hairdressing but growing in childcare from v low base (3% to 6%)
Is Level 2 a Trap for Males and Females?

- Content of vocational qualifications in service-related areas thin – limited platform for progression
- Limited access to off-the-job training – focus on accreditation of skills in the workplace
- Reflects (and reinforces?) nature of jobs in low-grade end of labour market
Summary: why it matters

- Affects LM outcomes and life-chances
- Availability of training
- Qualifications and progression
- Pay
- Career prospects
Persistent imbalance: young people’s attitudes

- EOC study of 14/15 year olds England and Wales
- Young people’s (and employers’) attitudes are gendered, e.g. to justify better pay for ‘male jobs’:
  “…because they put more work in, the work is more physical. They are totally different jobs, so they should be paid better” (male student)
Gender, jobs and learning

• ‘Male jobs’ require more learning, ‘female jobs’ use ‘natural skills’:

• “…it’s more technical stuff you need to learn…whereas more caring stuff you don’t need …to learn… but it’s more sort of inside you as well, it’s more built in to you so they don’t pay you much.” (female student)

• “we want someone who’s got … not exactly plumbing in their blood but real enthusiasm.” (plumbing employer)
Stigma

• Risks and consequences of atypical occupational choices

• “It’s like if you had a twenty year old [boy]… being like a child minder or like looking after two year olds or something, all his friends would be like “ha ha ha look at you looking after all these little people”… and you don’t like talk to anyone and you don’t get enough and stuff you’re like a wuss and stuff and they make you feel stupid.” (female student)
Tackling gender segregation

• Our evidence suggests that young people would be more likely to try non-traditional occupations if:
  • They received extra money to train
  • Better pay rates
  • Opportunity to try out through ‘tasters’ and ‘sampling’ opportunities
  • More of their sex made the same choice
Ideas from gender research

• Start young
• Single sex settings to experiment with non-traditional gender activities
• Discussion, awareness, challenge in class
• Challenge gender occupational typing through work experience, IAG, placements
• Use case studies from EQUAL project
• Role models
• Teacher education
Conclusions

• Make it priority for key stakeholders (government, schools, training providers, employers, Job Centreplus, parents)

• Monitor and challenge pathways to the LM under RPA – apprenticeship reflects wider persistent LM entry problem

• International comparative reviews of how to tackle gender inequality and imbalance

• What kinds of jobs are available for young people?
• For more information:
  Alison Fuller  a.fuller@ioe.ac.uk
  Lorna Unwin  l.unwin@ioe.ac.uk