

The gender 'gap' in attainment*

Seminar

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*based on doctoral research: <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/8094/1/2017CorryPhD.pdf>

Which boys?

All candidates by the end of S4 Males

Year	5+ Level 3		5+ Level 4		5+ Level 5	
	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD
2012	99	2	93	2	54	1
2011	99	2	94	1	57	1
2010	96	3	85	3	43	2
2009	98	2	91	2	48	2
2008	98	2	91	1	53	1

Females

Year	5+ Level 3		5+ Level 4		5+ Level 5	
	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD
2012	98	3	97	1	66	1
2011	99	2	93	2	61	2
2010	95	5	86	4	64	1
2009	96	4	88	3	58	1
2008	94	5	85	4	60	1

Difference in % between males and females Note if females outperform males number is +

Year	5+ Level 3		5+ Level 4		5+ Level 5	
2012	-1		4		12	
2011	0		-1		4	
2010	-1		1		21	
2009	-2		-3		10	
2008	-4		-6		7	

All candidates by the end of S5

Males

Year	5+ Level 3		5+ Level 4		5+ Level 5		1+ Level 6		3+ Level 6		5+ Level 6	
	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD
2012	100	100	96	1	73	1	71	1	51	1	29	1
2011	96	3	87	3	57	3	57	2	37	2	22	1
2010	100	100	94	1	64	2	61	1	45	1	24	1
2009	100	100	94	1	70	1	65	1	40	1	26	1
2008	100	100	93	1	73	1	68	1	42	1	21	1

Females

Year	5+ Level 3		5+ Level 4		5+ Level 5		1+ Level 6		3+ Level 6		5+ Level 6	
	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD
2012	100	100	95	2	86	1	82	1	59	1	36	1
2011	95	5	89	4	72	2	72	1	55	1	37	1
2010	96	4	89	3	73	1	70	1	51	1	34	1
2009	95	4	85	5	71	2	69	1	56	1	34	1
2008	95	4	92	2	74	1	63	1	49	1	37	1

Difference in % between males and females

Note if females outperform males number is +

2012	0	-1	13	11	8	7
2011	-1	2	15	15	18	15
2010	-4	-5	9	9	6	10
2009	-5	-9	1	4	16	8
2008	-5	-1	1	-5	7	16

- **Academically able boys** – T tests used to test for statistical significance

Literature review

Concept of gender in education:

- **Limited for academically able boys.** Focus in literature on **all** boys or working class/deprived boys or boys with behavioural issues or high achieving girls
- *Gender equality to gender equity (from 1990s)* – society and culture seen as influential
- *Poststructuralist stance (from 1990s):* multiplicities of masculinities and femininities – complexity of boys' identities: schools play an critical role in influencing gender identity
- *Discourses influencing gender identity* - underachievement, pedagogy, the culture of peers, and teachers, and support offered in schools

Still a binary stance – all boys and all girls (Butler, 2006; Davies, 2006)

Policy landscape**

- NATIONAL DATA – confirms findings from research
- *Reporting on attainment by gender* – specific legislation and guidance to schools related to gender
- Gender subsumed into inclusion and diversity, and equality legislation
- Focus on 'individual child' takes attention away from addressing inequity related to barriers due to gender and other factors
- NB gender is not exclusive – eg intersectionality of gender and socioeconomic factors and ability

** Journal article: Corry, Val (2017) The gender 'gap' in attainment: the Scottish Policy perspective, *Scottish Educational Review* 49(1), 33-50. http://www.scotedreview.org.uk/media/schools/social-sciences/2016_49-1_May_04_Corry.pdf

Studies commissioned by Governments

(Scotland, England, Wales, Australia – 1996 to 2008)

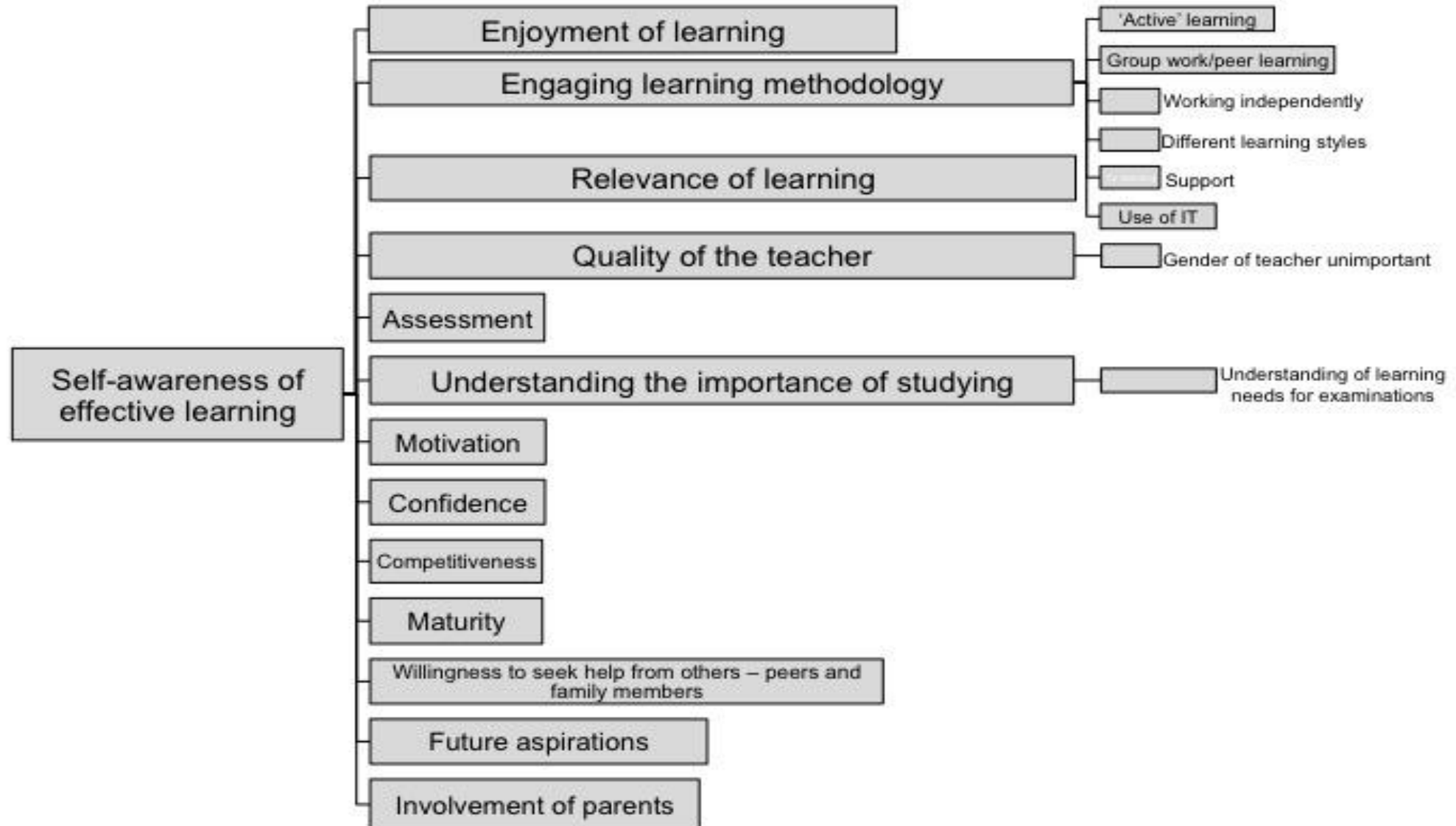
- Methodology – ‘testing out’ identified factors/examples of ‘good practice’ in schools
- No conclusive evidence of reasons for gender difference in performance – only two studies considered gender construction
- No strategies that demonstrated sustainable positive impact on attainment
- Little use made of views of learners as the primary means of collecting data
- Little information found for the able group

Methodology

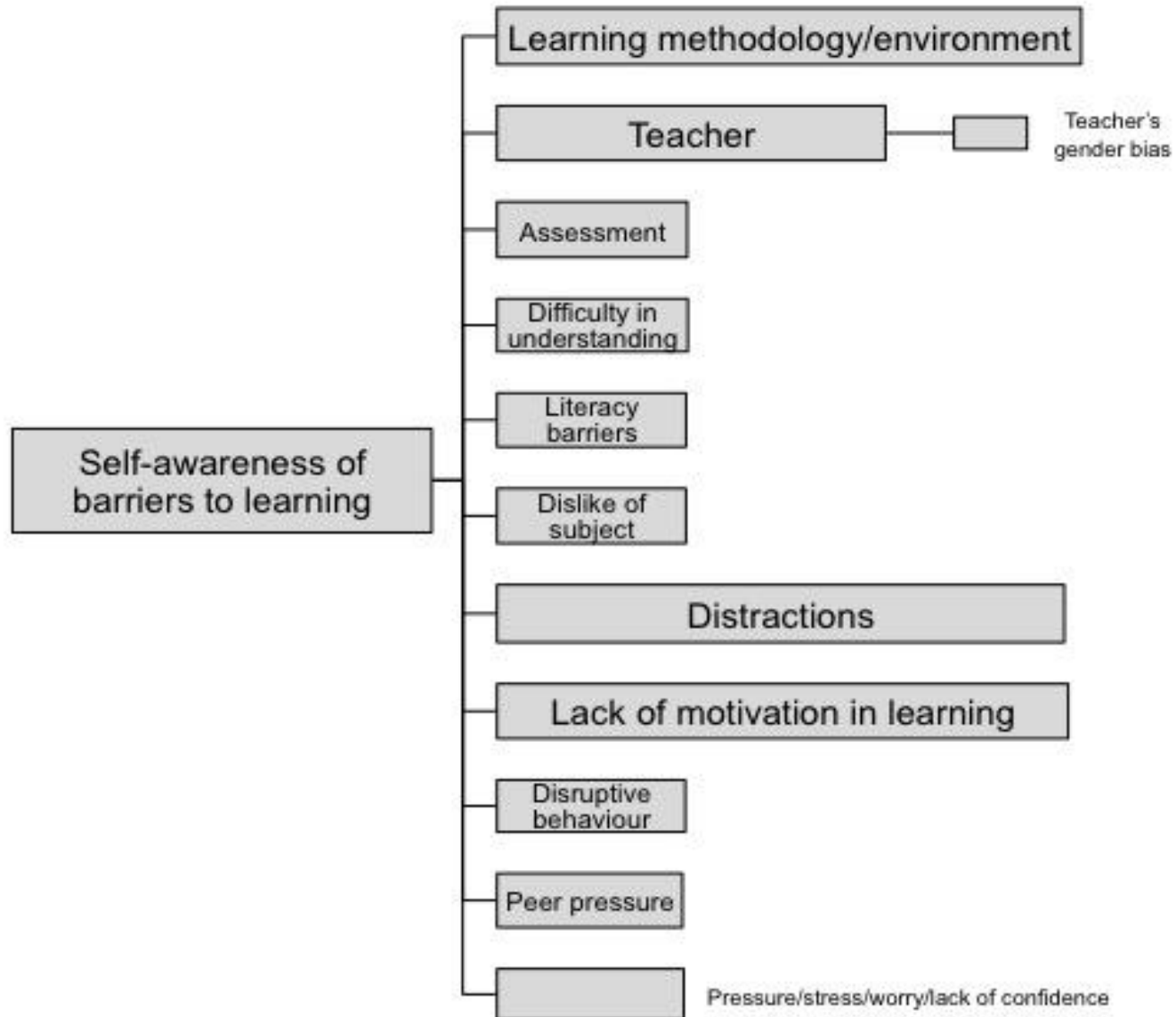
- **Case studies** in three secondary schools (main site – School A)
- Exploring **able/potentially able boys' perceptions** of their learning
- **Interviews**
- **Privileging voice of learner**
- **Grounded theory** – no attempt to test factors or *a priori* theories
- **Triangulation** – able/potentially able girls, teachers, parents
- **Transferability** – interviews in two other secondary schools (Schools B and C)

Findings – conceptual maps

Example: maps for individual boys



Findings – conceptual maps



Findings

Perception of gender identity

Summary of some of the points made:

- Recognition that not all boys the same – multiple identities
- Way children are brought up makes a difference

Perception of boys' gendered identity:

- Boys less concerned about performance
- Boys concentrating less
- Boys less interested in learning and hence revise less
- Boys more likely to misbehave – talk more; more easily distracted
- Boys more sport focused
- Boys less demonstrative when supported but appreciate help
- Peer pressure worse for boys
- Boys motivation is important

Perception of girls' gendered identity:

- Girls study more in class and at home; girls more focused in class and on their learning
- Girls do not misbehave
- Girls are more sensible
- Girls more interested in learning
- Girls revise in a different way – 'exhaustive'
- Girls more mature
- Perception that teachers know that girls are going to perform better than boys

Summary of findings in School A

Boys

- understanding how to achieve – both factors that helped and those that hindered their learning
- No evidence of negative peer pressure
- No evidence of teacher's gender being important
- Not disaffected
- **Gender self-concept – binary stance**

Views of others

- **Girls** – similar views to the boys about learning
- **Girls** – **gender self-concept – binary stance**
- **Teachers and parents** – **duality of gender**

Transferability?

Summary of findings in School B

School B – similar demographics – rurality, size, and FME and similar gendered pattern of attainment

- Views expressed by boys and triangulated with girls and teachers – **same as School A**
- **Gender self-concept – binary stance**

Transferability?

Summary of findings in School C

School C – similar demographics – rurality, size, and FME

No statistically significant difference in attainment between academically able boys and girls

Views expressed by boys and triangulated with girls and teachers – different to those in Schools A and B

- **No evidence of gender influencing learning**

Theory

Emergent theory through process of conceptualisation and categorisation – takes account of all the data and ‘fit’ with the data (Glaser, 2002)

Where there is significant difference in attainment between academically able boys and girls **boys’ self-realisation of successful learning is being limited by an essentialist construction of gender, with gender stereotypical characteristics. Gender is constructed as being bipolar, with these two categories being mutually exclusive**

Recommendations – Policy

- Have a renewed focus on gender and attainment including interrogating the differences between different ability groups of pupils, and having a more nuanced approach to which boys and which girls.
- Raise the profile of gender in education rather than the focus on inclusion as an overarching category.

Recommendations for support and advice for schools

Develop **models of professional learning** for teachers, educators, and others who are working with children and young people,

- to impact on classroom practice and culture
- to influence the wider community's thinking and working – parents
- to give prominence to 'pupil voice'

Recommendations for support and advice for schools

Develop **models of professional learning** for teachers, educators, and others who are working with children and young people, that consider

Gender theory and its impact

- Modernist stance: poststructuralist stance
- Gender equality: gender identity
- Fixed dual gender identity: multiplicity of gender identities – masculinities, femininities
- Impact of educational discourse on gender identity

Recommendations for support and advice for schools

Develop **models of professional learning** for teachers, educators, and others who are working with children and young people, that focus on

- understanding identity through professional dialogue and learning (Skelton, 2001; Timperley, 2011a, 2011b): 'packs'
- gender 'sensitive' classrooms: gender 'neutral', gender 'friendly' classrooms (Forde, 2014)

Recommendations for support and advice for schools

Develop **models of professional learning** for teachers, educators, and others who are working with children and young people, that focus on

- Developing programmes for pupils:
 - using a gender sensitive approach
 - exploring gender as a concept and pupils' own self-concept of gender, accepting of a range of masculinities and femininities.
- Understanding the influence of culture (Liu, 2006)
- Working with parents

Recommendations for support and advice for schools

Develop **models of professional learning** for teachers, educators, and others who are working with children and young people, that include

- Understanding learning through the lens of pupils' lived experience to offer alternative solutions
- Using qualitative methodology that deepens thinking and understanding of the learners' experiences.