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Chapter 12

Educating Generation Z about Issues Relating to Gender Equality in the Governance and Leadership of Sport in the UK

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Abstract

This chapter will outline the importance of engaging and informing Generation Z (Gen Z) about gender equality in UK sport governance and leadership. The chapter presents a live case study from an ongoing (2021–2026) European Commission ERASMUS 1 Sport Collaborative brief entitled *Gender Equality Toolkit for Generation Z* (GETZ) project. The theory explaining Gen Z behaviours, expectations and educational requirements will be explored as well as a review of the links between high participation rates and leadership roles in sport for men and the low participation rates and leadership roles for women, and how this issue can be addressed through wider awareness and increased education. The remainder of the chapter will introduce the online educational toolkit created through the GETZ project which attempts to build shared accountability for culture change through a teaching and learning community. Furthermore, considerations from the GETZ projects past, current and ongoing research studies related to areas of gender equality and Gen Z perceptions of inequality in sport will be discussed with the view to providing Gen Z with current knowledge on gender inequalities in sport and insight into the processes that reinforce existing inequalities as well as give them the space and skills to bring about long-term sustainable change.

Keywords: Generation Z; education; leadership; gender; inequality; sport

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the importance of engaging and informing Generation Z (Gen Z) about gender equality in UK sport governance and leadership through providing an example of a project that aims to do this. In this chapter we use the term gender equality, which the European Institute for Gender Equality (2020, https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1168) defines as 'equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls' and boys'. This chapter focuses on Generation Z (Gen Z) and how as educators we can engage Gen Z in understanding and challenging gender inequality by identifying, recognising and challenging power imbalances. In doing so, we argue this can create a level playing field where men and women can fully participate and redress the balance in governance and leadership in UK sport (United Nations, 2020). Gen Z are potential change agents of the future (Seemiller & Grace, 2017) who, with this knowledge and skills could be empowered to challenge the current circumstances of an underrepresentation of women in sport at all levels from grass roots to elite, commercial organisations to Olympic programmes. This peer group are considered able to challenge the status quo because of their documented values and beliefs being significantly different from the Millennial and Generation X populations (Seemiller & Grace, 2019).

The chapter will begin by discussing Gen Z behaviours, expectations and educational requirements. Then a case study of a European Commission ERASMUS 1 Sport Collaborative GETZ project (*G*ender *E*quality *T*oolkit for Generation *Z* – http://www.getzproject.eu) – a live project being delivered from 2021 to the end of 2026 – will be presented. The outcomes of the authors' research in the areas of gender equality, Gen Z perceptions of inequality in sport, and the use of new educational tools will be highlighted to provide details of recommendations for future policy and practice. Although the GETZ Project is a collaborative European project, this chapter will focus on the UK. In particular, the clear examples of progressive practice from Sport England and UK Sport to 'adopt a target of and take all appropriate actions to encourage a minimum of 30% of each gender on its board' (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016, p. 26); and the evaluative reports by Women in Sport (2017) titled *Beyond 30%: Female Leadership in Sport* have been central to understanding how the UK compares to the GETZ project partners.

Who Are the Existing Generations?

'Generation' groups refer to specific time periods of between 15 and 18 years to group individuals based on their year of birth. Generation groups may share distinctive characteristics through their collective experiences. Existing generations that are identified include Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z (Gen Z), with the upcoming generation being coined as Generation Alpha, born from mid-2010s to (estimated) mid-2020s. Members of a generation have common experiences that may influence their values and behaviours. Characteristics are often aligned to generations, but they are not applicable to all

individuals (Abrams & von Frank, 2013). Within generation groups there are still those with different backgrounds, influences and personalities and a consideration of individual differences (Lawler, 2011).

Baby Boomers (born mid-1940s to mid-1960s) are the only generation to be defined by an official government body (US Census Bureau) due to the baby boom that occurred after the Second World War. Research suggests that they are recognised for their work ethic and 'live to work' lifestyle. Generation X are the following generation (born from mid-1960s to 1980) and are likely to be the parents of the Gen Z population. This generation reportedly crave independence and embrace a work-life balance due to the impact of their workaholic parents, which has also resulted in them delaying marriage and having children by focusing on themselves first. The next generation are Millennials (born 1980 to mid-1990s) who tend to be known for collaborative work and being fully transparent, often leading to oversharing. They are the generation that are often negatively labelled as being lazy and spoilt but pride themselves on working smarter rather than harder. Despite Stillman and Stillman (2017) emphasising the distinct differences that separate the two generations, Gen Z are often mistaken for Millennials. In comparison, Gen Z (those born from mid-1990s to mid-2010s) tend to be far more independent and private, specifically with what they choose to post online. Additionally, they are acknowledged as entrepreneurial and realistic, often having a 'side hustle' alongside their full-time job because of being income-conscious due to growing up within a period of recession. Statistically, the older Gen Z populations are more likely to be impacted by the COVID-19 crisis due to the economic downturn and lack of career opportunities (Belgibayeva et al., 2020).

Who Are Gen Z and Why Do They Matter?

Gen Z are the first generation to have never experienced life before the internet, and subsequently are incredibly technologically astute. Unsurprisingly, Gen Z have become emotionally attached to the internet and the development of 'FOMO' (the fear of missing out) has become a particular issue within this peer group. Research suggests many have trouble refraining from the constant checking of updates on their phones from various social media platforms and communication channels (Roberts & Pirog, 2013). The role of technology within the lives of Gen Z is a particularly distinctive role as it is often the primary source of accessing information, whether that be 'is it going to rain today?' to 'how do I get to…?'. It is also a key method of communication and a crucial part of their social lives. Resultantly, technology has been incorporated within education at all levels from primary to higher education. As this new generation are entering the workforce, and account for almost a third of the global population, it is particularly important that we understand that their views, values, and motives towards inclusiveness, openness, respect, and individuality will have a huge impact on social norms and culture.

According to research from Seemiller and Grace (2019), the prominence of and exposure to social justice issues within their lifetime has ignited a large proportion

of Gen Z to be open-minded and strive for equal rights. This includes a commitment to ensuring future occupations make a positive impact on others with a view to 'make the world a better place' (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). According to Perna (27 December 2019), Gen Z often tackle these global issues through activism and in many cases lead the way due to three primary reasons. Firstly, they use and understand the role of technology and social media in providing a platform to amplify the voices of young people and enabling statements to go viral. They use social media to connect with others to reflect, discuss and gain support on key issues. Secondly, they are on track to be the most educated generation, with their broad access to information and their desire to use it to make a difference. Thirdly, their passion and commitment to face the prominent global issues means they are more inclined to stand up for what they believe in.

Why Does Gender Equality in UK Sport Governance and Leadership Matter to Gen Z?

There has been a persistent historical norm of low participation rates and representation in all forms of sport, exercise, and physical activity by women in comparison to men. According to the Department of Health and Social Care (2019), the physical activity guidelines for adults is to be active for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise or at least 75 minutes of vigorous intensity exercise per week. However, Sport England (2020) suggest that 39% of girls and women aged 16 are not reaching those activity targets. Therefore, it is likely that many Gen Z are growing up in households where women are less active than men.

Campaigns such as #ThisGirlCan have been influential in creating change to address the physical activity gender gap and some progress has been made regarding girls and women's participation within sport. However, the same encouragement and campaigning has not been parallel with the employment of females within sporting occupations (Burton, 2015; Joseph & Anderson, 2016). Research findings highlight the clear gender gap that exists within the management and leadership of UK sport organisations, with women continuing to hold fewer positions of influence and power compared to men. For example, Women in Sport (2017) found that less than half of the 68 Sport England and UK Sport funded National Governing Bodies (NGBs) did not meet Sport England and UK Sport's (2016) 30% target of female board membership, with nine NGB's having no women in any senior leadership roles (excluding the CEO). Other research suggests that where women are involved in sport at an occupational level, they often hold lower status job roles congruent with traditional gender norms (Burton, Barr, Fink, & Bruening, 2009).

Gender balanced sport governance is particularly important for Gen Z as those holding the power within sport often influence their involvement in the early years of sport. Wider consideration is hard to achieve if the decision-makers are only men, as 'it's hard to be what you can't see' (Edelman, 21 August 2015). Evans and Pfister (2020) argue that an under representation of women in leadership roles on

a global scale, not just in the UK, means there is gender inequity in decision-making positions, which will have a significant impact on Gen Z and their future. The 'patriarchal selection practices and organisational cultures reinforce [the] inequity, despite evidence that men in leadership roles recognise the problem' (Evans & Pfister, 2020, p. 1). In the UK there have been some prominent positions in sport governance and leadership held by women which indicates willingness to change and evolve. Yet there remains an overall lack of women in leadership and management positions from grassroots to elite sport, which influences the early sporting experiences of Gen Z as well as the provision of role models for their future. It is therefore particularly important to consider the links between high participation rates and leadership roles in sport for men and the low participation rates and leadership roles for women, and how this issue can be addressed through wider awareness and increased education.

Arguably, Gen Z could challenge historic hierarchies with their increased value for diversity, providing the opportunity for individuals with varied background and perspectives to have a voice and contribute within decision making roles, which are typically dominated by the most privileged (e.g., white, middle aged men). However, the patriarchal system could devalue Gen Z, their ability to change leadership stereotypes and the ability of women already within leadership roles to confront and combat the persistent negative gender and leadership stereotypes that exist (Hums & Grappendorf, 2007). The work of Piggott and Pike (2020) extends this argument through highlighting gendered informal organisational practices in English sport governance and the power dynamics that favour men. It could therefore be argued that there is a lack of willingness or confidence to challenge the status quo. This is particularly concerning given that, based on an Ipsos MORI (2018) poll, 75% of Gen Z think their lives will not be better than previous generations. Thus, developing a culture where there is a visible and recognisable diversity within key roles in sport should be front and central to any future policy change in the UK.

It should of course be recognised that both men and women are exposed to gender stereotypes in sport, which in turn affects gender equality and may lead to unequal treatment. An integrated approach to equality between women and men in sport is needed to avoid and challenge persistent stereotypes that could harm the future of sport, sport governance and sport leadership. Thereby, equity in sport careers at all levels in sport should be the norm for women as well as men. As Sotiriadou and de Haan (2019, p. 3) argue, as 'males numerically dominate boards of sport organisations that are at the top level of sport governance, and hold high-level positions, they play an essential role in enabling gender equity'. Therefore, men need to be central in creating opportunities for more women in key decision-making roles in sport and in addressing the cultural issues at play. However, while policy can help identify and facilitate quantifiable change it may at times be positioned in a culture unable or unaware of how to facilitate such change. To create an environment for change, men and women need to understand how gender bias plays out in the workplace and what can be done to tackle it to ensure a positive outcome.

What Are Gen Z Perceptions of Gender Equality within Sport in the UK?

While there is a lack of literature focussing on Gen Z and sport, we are aware and appreciate that they have developed a more liberal and accepting view of the world and those within it (Pew Research Center, 2019). However, their education is still informed by the standards, systems and social constructs introduced by earlier generations. For instance, in the Girls Attitude Survey (Girlguiding, 2020) girls were very aware that their choices in sport and PE at school decrease relative to boys as they get older. Girlguiding (2020) stated that 91% of girls aged 7–10 say they have had the same choices as boys, compared to 51% aged 11–16, and less than half (40%) aged 17–21. Furthermore, over half (56%) of girls and young women aged 11–21 agreed that schools could do more to tackle gender stereo-types. Although not specifically related to sport, gender stereotypes clearly influence further and higher education and career choices. 44% of the girls surveyed aged 11–21 had been patronised or made to feel stupid because they are a girl, and instead 'want to be valued for themselves, and not be judged or told they have to do certain things because they're girls' (Girlguiding, 2020, p. 17).

To explore the necessity of fostering cultural change in relation to gender equality in sport, the authors, alongside colleagues from Virje University Brussels (VUB), Molde University College, Norway and Amsterdam University of Applied Science (AUAS), conducted a study that aimed to understand Gen Z's level of awareness on issues related to gender (in)equality in sport (Schaillée et al., 2021). This issue is pertinent as, if we understand the importance of Gen Z and their influence on the future of sporting organisations, educational inter-ventions can be put in place to ensure that gender equality in sport is understood, appreciated, and addressed to enable and empower to illicit change. Using focus groups conducted at the four universities, Schaillée et al. (2021) found evidence of continued stereotyping and resistance to change sport or encourage greater mixed sport due to perceptions of ability, size of bodies and strength. The findings reiterated the key role of parents, teachers, and coaches within social-ization, by encouraging participation within activities that align to gendered social norms, and subsequently shaping attitudes towards involvement within sport (Hargreaves, 1994). The results from the UK participants reflect how gender and social norms continued to be reinforced by what it means to be male or female (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Mahalik et al., 2005). There was a lack of knowledge by the UK participants of governance, law, and leadership within sport, although they were aware that women were less represented on sports boards and within coaching or officiating roles within sport. It was also evident that the use of the sporting space (e.g., changing rooms, clubhouse, training facilities) were not equally shared by both genders. The participants were aware of this through experience rather than taught knowledge about the reasons for these trends or the potential implications of such trends on their future. More specifically, the example of mixed sport teams was raised from school and club experiences where tactics were discussed in the boys' changing rooms, therefore excluding girls from this space.

Findings from the focus groups related to the lack of knowledge and under-standing about the governance and leadership of sport in the UK. Participants noted that they thought identity markers such as gender or race should not limit individual potential and were against the role of quotas and policies to force women into roles. Instead, the participants agreed that knowledge, skills, commitment, and engagement should be the key recruitment factors and that gender should be irrelevant. Gen Z pose an interesting paradox, by recognising the issues in relation to inequalities, while continuing to resist change. This requires the development of critical thinking so that people can breakdown existing stereotypes and gender disparities can be challenged. This could be achieved by providing this next generation with current knowledge on gender inequalities in sport and insight into the processes that reinforce existing inequalities as well as give them the space and skills to bring about long-term sustainable changes.

How Can We Engage and Educate Gen Z?

The first Gen Z students started graduating from Higher Education in the UK from around 2017 and there are approximately 2.4 million students currently studying in UK Higher Education institutions (Bolton, 2020). This provides a significant opportunity to empower Gen Z to tackle global issues such as gender inequality. Online learning has become an important tool within higher educa-tion, which can harness greater learning and appeal to Gen Z students. The significance of online learning has been emphasised by the impact of COVID 19 and the unprecedented circumstances that are governing how students are accessing education.

While there is evidence to suggest that a relationship exists between effective pedagogy and technology, which can help to achieve desirable outcomes related to learning and conceptual change (Edens, 2008), the challenge is the contrast between the team-oriented learning approach of Millennials in comparison to Gen Z's intrapersonal approach (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Gen Z tend to favour an independent approach which means they are more inclined to work at their own pace, in their own space. Gen Z tend to value having an opportunity to think on their own first before having an opportunity to work collaboratively with others. Furthermore, the literature is inconclusive regarding how Gen Z prefer to communicate, with some (e.g., Palley, 23 April 2012) suggesting that 50% of Gen Z feel more comfortable talking to others online rather than in real life (although there is lack of focus from a UK perspective in this area). Others (e.g., Stillman & Stillman, 2017) suggest that 82% of Gen Z prefer face-to-face, but this is inter-preted as virtual as well as in-person.

It has already been argued that Gen Z rely heavily on technology for all parts of their lives and their first instinct for obtaining information is to use the internet, either via search engines or via videos on YouTube. Due to a preference for learning by observation, Gen Z often use videos rather than reading instructions when learning a new skill or gaining knowledge. Therefore, when focussing on education, Gen Z's preferences toward video-based learning and case studies

rather than lengthy lecture-based learning creates the basis for a specific type of online learning such as a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). A MOOC is a free, open online course that provides a flexible way to gain knowledge or skills within topic areas.

Case Study: The GETZ Project

The issues identified by Schaillée et al. (2021) form the backdrop to a research project entitled *Gender Equity Toolkit* for Generation *Z* (GETZ), funded by the European Commission as an ERASMUS 1 Sport Collaborative project. This project focused upon educating and empowering both men and women to facilitate more effective gender equality in sport leadership and, rather than a top-down approach, the project was designed to address the issue from the bottom up. The project was based on the importance of recognising that gender equality is not a women's issue and that women alone cannot achieve gender equality. Men also need to be engaged, aware and active on the subject to ensure that they activate governance and change for all. Therefore, the project specifically engages with all members of Generation Z. Similarly, solving the problem of gender inequality is not achievable in isolation, by one national policy or by one organisational strategy. Although this chapter is focused on the UK perspective, the GETZ project was not a single agency approach but instead a multi-agency perspective and a collaborative effort. The GETZ team consisted of four universities from Belgium, Holland, Norway, and the UK, plus three national sports organisations from Croatia, Sweden, and Slovenia, all chosen due to comparable socio-cultural environments in relation to gender equality. The project aimed to develop an educational toolkit through a MOOC which could enable content to be taught as part of a curriculum or form part of independent self-enrollment study. To do this the GETZ project undertook an action research approach.

An Action Research Approach to Developing the Educational Toolkit

The GETZ project MOOC was constructed utilising an action research approach (Mertler, 2013) which aided and supported the design of a framework for the development and delivery of the educational toolkit. As action research seeks to integrate theory and practice, the process of transformative change and 'taking action' took precedence and so, a seven-stage approach was utilised (Mertler, 2013). This included: (1) identifying a general or initial idea; (2) reconnaissance or fact finding; (3) planning; (4) take first action step; (5) evaluating; (6) amending the plan; and (7) taking the second action step. This clearly continues in a spiral approach so there is constant review and reflection on the project based on approaches and outcomes:

(1) The objective of the GETZ project was to design, develop and deliver an innovative educational resource specifically designed to educate Generation Z on the issues relating to gender equality and equal opportunities in sport.

(2) An initial exploration of the perceptions and understanding of Gen Z towards (in)equality in sport was conducted and evidenced a continued stereotyping in relation to a resistance to change sport and perceptions of ability, size of bodies and strength. Furthermore, the memories and experiences of childhood and the gendering of sports were considered due to the socializing influence of parents, teachers, and coaches. In particular, the UK students could not name one woman in a leadership role within sport (Schaillé e et al., 2021). So, although they are aware of discrepancies, the depth of knowledge is absent with regards to why or the potential implications it has on their future. This data supported the team to devise and develop resources with the intention of raising awareness on a wider platform of the sport industry, developing Gen Z's knowledge as to what influences them and others, and to facilitate debate about gender equality in sport leadership.

(3) The GETZ educational toolkit was to be delivered through a MOOC via six units. These units reflect wider society and factors that continue to impact upon the lived experiences of women: Culture & Society, Governance & Law, Commerce, Media, Participation and Events. Culture and Society highlights the gender related issues that impact people's sporting lives, identities, understandings, and experiences to increase individuals' awareness of the interplay between culture, society, and sport. Governance and Law explores the actions of sporting organisations and international federations to emphasise the importance of equality and diversity within leadership and, more specifically, decision-making roles. Commerce discusses the issues surrounding the structure and function of sport from a commercial perspective, identifying the potential investment opportunities within women's sport for both individual athletes and sport events. Media focuses upon the influence of the media on the representation of women's sport and individual athletes and its impact on women's sport, emphasising the inter-relationship between media and societal perceptions. Participation reflects the understanding of issues and influences surrounding women's participation within sport and physical activity in an attempt to overcome the barriers that women face across all levels, from gender stereotypes to motherhood. Finally, Events examines the impact and legacy of sport events, considering the sporting experience from commercial, participant, and spectating perspectives to identify and evaluate issues such as equal pay and gender parity.

(4) The content of the toolkit would have an interactive focus with the use of discussion boards, podcasts, videos, news articles and case studies along with quizzes, blogs, and social media discussions. The intention was to ensure that the target group of Gen Z feel comfortable with the platform and can blend their learning with practical, theoretical, and applied perspectives. This is particularly important given the intrapersonal online manner which Gen Z prefer to learn with. In addition to the educational resource, a website, and a social media presence on Twitter and Facebook were created, alongside marketing materials.

(5)   The piloting and reviewing of the GETZ Toolkit were an important phase allowing time for academics and students to engage with the platform. The reaction to topics within the MOOC content from student cohorts and the interactive digital learning strategy employed was central to the action research approach. Feedback from learners and facilitators from this stage were gathered and analysed to make improvements. The pilot stage was conducted at two universities, one in the UK and one in Norway with a total of 85 first and second year undergraduate students.

(6)   Results from the pilot indicated that some amendments to content were necessary, and especially the unit on Governance and Law. This was the knowledge area that was needed most, but engagement was very low and so including examples that focused on diversity such as race, religion and parasport were found to increase interest but also deepen knowledge within sport governance to reflect the core values of Gen Z.

(7)   The resulting design of the educational toolkit delivered through a MOOC was tailored to the values, beliefs, perceptions, and preferences of Gen Z. All the units include a variety of video-based tasks, alongside optional readings, and discussion activities which they can engage with once individual work has been completed. There are also case studies and the incorporation of social media or discussion boards to discuss and engage with others. The approach from an educational perspective is one of blended learning, so the MOOC can be embedded within a teaching programme as transforming topics of inequality requires a student-teacher collaboration to enhance reflective practice amongst both students and teachers (Oliver & McCaughtry, 2012) but could also be utilised as a standalone learning platform.

The development of the educational toolkit was the GETZ project's first step towards embedding gender equality issues throughout sporting educational programmes. The GETZ toolkit (www.getzproject.eu) was officially launched in September 2019 and within its first academic year was delivered to over 350 students on various sport courses by the four GETZ project University partners, within the UK, Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands. The content was delivered in a variety of ways, either through a taught face to face context with embedded academic assignment attached, a blended approach of using discussion activities within a class environment and self-directed study or through entirely self-directed study using online discussion forums for debate and discussion.

Outcomes of Engagement and Learning on Gender Equality in Sport via the MOOC on Governance and Leadership from a UK Perspective

On the sport governance and leadership unit, participating students can respond to various case studies, quizzes, videos, or articles which offer a unique insight into understanding issues relating to gender equality. The responses to various

tasks embedded within modules that relate to specific learning outcomes were used as formative assessments. The received responses paint a picture of how gender stereotypes continue to be persistent and perpetuate the problem. A response to a task regarding sport board representation provides a good example of this:

> …by having both [genders] on board… you can gain a more all-round understanding of the situation. A male's perspective may not be the most effective way to build or grow women sport as they may not understand the barriers and other factors that go into understanding women sports. A female may have a better understanding of this and would be more efficient in growing the sport. Barriers such as confidence and the general feeling of being inferior to males may be a factor in preventing female career development. these could be overcome by employing more females within the organisation as it may allow females to feel welcome and equal, without feeling inferior/intimidated.

While the response is utilising the correct phrases and terminology based on the readings and tasks, the individual has provided a personal response rather than a learned and knowledge-based response. This may be because of the virtual element of the MOOC and may suggest that academics are required to push students or learners within a taught environment to have the debates required to consider depth of knowledge, how it impacts them specifically and provide opportunities to discuss ways to address and combat the issue. Debates on the discussion activities were particularly successful as the Gen Z students had time to prepare in advance before coming together in groups. This works particularly well when the activity is based around topics of intersectionality such as religion, culture, and race as it enables individuals to provide responses based on their own experiences while also gaining an insight into and respecting other perspectives.

The creation of an additional unit was made during the academic year to provide a formal submission of work in the form of a self-reflective task about how students had used knowledge gained from the MOOC and put it into practice within their communities and peer groups. For example, many students have already suggested that they are more self-aware of how they present themselves to everyone to ensure inclusion and understanding. Furthermore, in the UK there are examples of students (especially women) who have completed the MOOC joining sport boards, taking on more leading roles within their own sport clubs and continuing their own interest in the topic into their final year studies. Lastly, the option to request a certificate of completion and to take part in various research studies attached to the GETZ project have also had a good uptake from many MOOC participants with 54 registering interest to continue being involved in promoting the gender equality in sport agenda by the end of the first academic year. This is a good outcome for the GETZ project at this stage before roll-out to other institutions from 2021–2026. Research has estimated that MOOC completion rates tend to be below 10% (Hew & Cheung, 2014; Jordan, 2014;

Koller, Ng, Do, & Chen, 2013). Therefore, a completion rate of 15.4% is positive and could be a result of the toolkit being part of their taught curriculum.

Measuring Impact and the Sustainability of the Toolkit

The next element of Action Research includes a continuation of planning, reviewing and action, and there have been a few unexpected issues arising from utilising a Massive Online Open Course in relation to Gen Z. Firstly, the case studies, discussions and tasks related to the intersectionality of sport were answered and responded to more readily than others. It is appreciated that Gen Z are viewed as the most diverse generation in relation to gender non-binary identities and racial and ethnic diversity, but it is still interesting that those topics that require a greater level of criticality are answered more frequently. It is possible that considering the more complex human experience aids their under-standing in shaping knowledge around relationships built on power such as gender, race, sexuality, and disability (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Herman, 11 February 2019). The second issue was communication, or indeed the lack of it. It is expected that Gen Z are tech savvy and embrace social media and a virtual learning environment, however, in the first academic year Gen Z participants did not use social media at all to communicate on the topic in relation to tasks, to state they had completed the MOOC or even to provide examples of gender inequality in sport. There was also a lack of interaction across countries or classes on open discussion boards and also limited success within class environments. This has led to a new research project and many tasks having to be updated and changed to ensure they were completed rather than avoided. Arguably, Gen Z may not be engaging as they value privacy (Kingston, 2014), but also seem less aware about their responsibility as learners in this environment or how it can appear as if no one cares about gender equality in sport. This contradicts the responses provided within in-class work and self-directed study and assignments and evidences the complexity of engagement in more sensitive and difficult topics.

Conclusion

The Gender Equality Toolkit was born out of an Erasmus 1 collaborative project focused on educating Gen Z about existing inequalities in sport governance and leadership. Gen Z have been identified as the new influential workforce and have the potential to become change agents of the future. However, to create change, individuals need to understand how gender inequality is reflected within the industry of sport, reiterating the importance of diversity by ensuring that decision making roles are occupied by individuals from all walks of life. This is needed to provide a broad and balanced perspective and ensure all views are heard and addressed. Whilst policy can help to identify and facilitate quantifiable change, it may at times be positioned in a culture unable or unaware of how to action such change, especially at grass roots level or in voluntary organisations.

The first research project conducted as part of the GETZ project (Schaillée et al., 2021) was sought to gain an understanding of Gen Z and their perceptions of inequalities in sport, with a view to developing a toolkit with the potential to increase a knowledge base that could influence their decision making within future careers in the sport industry. The resulting MOOC created an educational intervention so that areas related to gender equality in sport could be addressed and understood. Ultimately, this involved empowering them to enact change at any level within sport, whether that be in the changing rooms, volunteering as a coach or official, as a chairperson of university sport teams or after graduation when experiencing work opportunities. The emphasis on being knowledgeable, educated, and informed can support development of confidence to thrive in the sport industry and hopefully address institutional and societal inequality.

This chapter has highlighted the key characteristics of Gen Z as the first generation to have never experienced life before the internet, and research has indicated that Generation Z are open minded and inclusive with their views on identity and have a passion for equality. Thus, it is no surprise that intersectionality is embraced by these individuals (Pew Research Center. 2019). However, evidence from the MOOC and the GETZ project suggests an interesting paradox which evidences that there is still work to-do and that not all Gen Z are as open-minded or inclusive as might be expected. This was particularly evident from an unexpected challenge for the project which was that there was a limited response of the Gen Z MOOC participants engaged in social media platforms, a space where others outside of the MOOC itself could view and respond. This has resulted in a further two research projects being undertaken, one on a pre- and post-MOOC study to challenge knowledge on gender equality in sport, and the second on understanding the communication preferences of Gen Z.

As more students begin to complete the MOOC, there have been examples of increased awareness and confidence in students (particularly women) who have taken on leadership and governance roles in sport whilst still completing studies. These stories of the toolkit participants after completion are the next stage of the research project as there have been several interested Gen Z MOOC participants who would like to continue being part of the gender equality taskforce. The final research project aims to demonstrate the impact that the toolkit has had on student participants and their journey to learn and apply concepts such as inclusiveness, openness, respect, and individuality within their governance and leadership roles in sport.

Access to the MOOC

The development of the Gender Equity Toolkit for Generation Z via a MOOC is one step towards embedding gender equality issues throughout sporting educational programmes. The platform attempts to build shared accountability for culture change throughout a teaching and learning community. It is only through raising awareness, open debate and developing and transferring knowledge and skills in a way that engages Gen Z that we can challenge the established norms

and achieve cultural change that drives changes in gender equality. The GETZ toolkit will become available to Universities and Sports organisations/associations across the UK and Europe from 2021. To engage with the GETZ project and to participate in the MOOC go to www.getzproject.eu. If you wish to use the MOOC as a teaching tool contact GETZproject@worc.ac.uk and instructor access can be provided.

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