
Male teachers get top marks



By [Zoe McKay](#)

New findings by Amine Ouazad, an Assistant Professor at INSEAD, shows that one of the most effective ways to get students to listen and work hard is to put a male teacher at the front of the classroom.

In today's world, as taxpayers everywhere are concerned over paying for schools, it comes as a shock to see that, according to new findings by Amine Ouazad, an Assistant Professor of Economics and Political Science at INSEAD, one of the most effective ways to get students to listen and work hard is to put a male teacher at the front of the classroom.



Ouazad, in collaboration with the University of Westminster, originally sought to understand whether pupils' perceptions can explain differences in effort, motivation and educational achievement. What they found was that children have a better perception of male teachers; they try harder and think that male teachers will grade them more fairly.

"Actually, surprisingly, what we saw is that students have better perceptions of male teachers, but that male teachers are not rewarding students more than female teachers. So there is a disconnect between what students perceive and what teachers do," says Ouazad. "We have seen that male teachers actually induce far more effort, much more investment and that is a good thing."

In Ouazad's experiment involving 1,200 pupils across 29 schools in Liverpool, London and Manchester in the UK, the nine male teachers involved not only achieved significantly better results than their 18 female colleagues, but did so with both the boys and the girls in their classes.

The children were each given two pounds in 20 pence pieces and had the choice either to keep the money or 'buy' questions to be answered in a test. For each question correctly answered they would double their bet (meaning they would earn 40 pence). If they answered incorrectly, they would lose the 20 pence bet.

"We found ... there was more betting of the students when they were assessed by a male teacher. And the difference was very significant. It was between 0.6 and 1.0 question more chosen by the student. To give you a perspective, it is a 20-minute experiment. If you imagine that each student is trying one question less every 20 minutes spent in the classroom and you multiply that by the number of 20 minutes in the year, that's a lot of forgone educational opportunities and that is why we believe the results are significant."

With girls outperforming boys at every level in UK schools today, cumulating with a seven per cent gap in GCSE results, and 130,000 more girls than boys entering higher education last year, the UK is seriously evaluating why boys are falling behind. "The traditional story in education is that male teachers act as role models for male pupils and that female teachers act as role models for female pupils ... but our research shows that the positive effects of male teachers is the same for male and female pupils," says Ouazad. And yet men only represent 15 per cent of primary school teachers in the UK

today.

When asked why, Ouazad responds: “As an economist I would say the salary is an important component. It is also important that we think about ways to better integrate male teachers into schools. Anecdotal evidence suggests that male teachers see schools as a very feminine environment, and this may be one of the deterrents. But I think the salary is a very important component.”

“In terms of policy making, this will strengthen the fact that we will need to do more to have more male teachers in the classroom. And we also need to know more: I’m not sure that the paper tells us everything that has to be learned about male and female teachers.”

This article was written by Zoe McKay based on an interview for INSEAD Knowledge.

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