Written evidence submitted by The GEC

The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services

Diversity and Inclusion

Submitted by Nicole Ponsford FRSA | Co-CEO and Founder of the GEC (Global Equality Collective), a community and collective of diversity and inclusion subject matter experts in schools, homes and businesses

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How can we encourage diversity and inclusion across edtech and the industry?

- **Access** | COVID-19 has illustrated the accelerated need for access for all, both in terms of education and employment- and this is to remain at a national and global level
- **Representation** | Celebrate diversity and inclusion - from role models in the classroom and workplace to representation in marketing and communications, actively challenge and close gaps for under represented groups at graduate level through industry and education working other to support positive pathways for inclusion
- **Position diversity for success** | Teacher and employee training around dispositions (e.g. unconscious bias and inclusion) and data, programmes to improve diversity statistics for students and closing gender and inclusion gaps in education and industry
- **Digital Futures** | Ensure engagement and dispositions to technology (especially at transition points) that are personalised to individuals not 'stereotyped' initiatives to retain and recruit students, ensure confidence in technology is secured between Primary and Secondary education

What is the EdTech Dividend - what gains do you see?

- More inclusive workforce for the Future of Work
- Close gap for under represented groups seen in COVID-19 and beyond
- Better choice of skilled workers
- More productive workforce
- Better Financial performance
- More innovative and creative sectors
- Better customer experiences

Digital Divide | Case for Change

Why is it important? Why now?

Things are still stark when it comes to [the global digital divide where 327 million fewer women (than men) have a smartphone and can therefore use the mobile Internet](). Women are under-represented in ICT jobs, top management and academic careers and, men are four times more likely than women to be ICT specialists. At 15 years of age, on average, only 0.5% of girls wish to become ICT professionals, compared to 5% of boys. Women-owned start-ups receive 23% less funding and are 30% less likely to have a positive exit compared to male-owned businesses. In Europe only 11.2% of tech leaders are women. In the recent [OECD results](), only 1% of female students want a career in technology.

The UK is facing a huge digital skills shortage and we are about to see another leap in technology which will double the number of roles. In the UK there are still [huge gaps]() when it comes to both sectors and roles; only [16% of ICT Professionals are female]().

Historically, women have been excluded from both digital education and (as a result) careers. The UK's technology timeline is littered with invisible gaps where countless, forgotten or nameless digital workers and leaders have been lost to history, simply because of their sex. The situation is obviously far worse for workers and scholars of colour in the western world; the intersection of race and sex has left them completely on the outside. If you then consider mental or physical impairments, only 6% of children have a disability or additional need, but [this figure]() rises to 16% of working adults and more with age to 45% of adults at state pension age, making the total figure 13.3 million people in the UK or one in five.

Although we are now largely aware of the fact that the industry has missed out on talent by excluding women, the 'cultural hangover' from that long period of exclusion has lasted into the modern day.

Why does it matter?
Until very recently most technology, engineering, digital arts and maths themed toys, games, books, TV shows and even some school material was talking directly and only to boys. Girls were ignored or worse, actively excluded. It's important to understand the scale of the issue but not get over faced by it. Your organisation may feel like a small cog in a huge machine, however if every cog acts together, the machine will move. The evidence over the last 5 years shows that the direction of travel is positive; it's slow progress, but it's progress.

We must continue to do more, and work harder if we are to close UK digital gender gaps. We must also pull together and each do our bit to encourage digital skills and potential in the [next generation](). We all have a part to play;

- Parents at home and in our [children's schools]()
- [Employees]() pushing for change in our organisations
- [Policy and industry leaders]() connecting with schools to open up the world of digital career pathways to the next generation - and securing positive inclusive workplaces

Waiting for the digital gap to close - at its current rate - will take decades. It is therefore imperative that we each take steps to help the effort, and don't wait until tomorrow or next week to do so.

Solution

We are now piloting our membership mark and GEC App for businesses and schools. This is being validated by the University of Kent and Surrey.

For more information:

www.thegec.org/app

I would be keen to discuss this more.

Further Evidence and Reading
GECFutures | Women in Tech | EdTech Collective — The Global Equality Collective
WeAreTechWomen: Women in Technology London, UK, Global
UKBlackTech – Creating the most innovative tech sector in the world
Delivering STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills for the economy
Annual Core-STEM Stats Round Up: 2019-20
The Gender Diversity Report 2020
Skills shortage costing STEM sector £1.5bn
2018 Workforce Statistics
Tech Talent Charter Diversity in Tech Report
"Not for people like me?" WISE
Blacks In Technology - The #1 place for Blacks In Technology
Having a Disability in Tech - Diversity in Tech
CaSE Report - Improving Diversity in STEM
TTC Toolkit
Why gender diversity makes business sense
Gender Balance in Computing programme opens to all schools in England

Nicole Ponsford
Co-CEO and Founder of the GEC (Global Equality Collective)

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