

Bias and Inequality

What is bias?

- This professional learning explores the concept of bias and how it links to stereotypes and inequality
- A stereotype is defined as a 'widely held belief or generalisation about behaviours, traits and characteristics performed by different groups of people'.
- Bias arises as a result of exposure to stereotypes and limited representation. Unconscious, or more accurately, implicit bias often unknowingly influences our perceptions, decisions and interactions with others and can be particularly harmful for people who face different forms of oppression.
- Bias and stereotypes reinforce structural inequality, and structural inequality can provide a foundation for the perpetuation of bias and stereotypes.
- Conscious bias, on the other hand, occurs when we subscribe to oppressive or prejudiced value or belief systems.

Why do I need to challenge my own bias?

- We all have different biases, and although many of them we may be unaware of at first, it is our responsibility to identify these and consider how to challenge them.
- Bias can be an interpersonal issue, however, it has structural roots. Examining different forms of racism can help us understand this relationship. Structural racism ensures that the economic, political, social and cultural structures contribute to the unequal distribution of privilege, resources, safety and power in favour of the dominant racial group. Interpersonal racism can contribute to this.
- Challenging interpersonal behaviours, stereotypes and bias can help prevent progression and contribution to societal inequality and violence.
- Bias can contribute to unfair outcomes: it can influence how we assess learners, how we interpret behaviours, how we interact with learners and how we communicate with parents, carers, colleagues and wider community members.

Activities

- **Harvard Implicit Bias Test:** This allows us to explore which groups of people we hold biases about. Link: <http://bit.ly/HarvardTest>
- **Who do I Trust:** This activity helps to explore the concept of diversity, and how implicit bias may be formed through our life experiences.

Things to try

- Reflect on situations where your implicit bias may have been more likely to come into play, for example, where you have had to make lots of decisions, situations where you

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might be stressed or feeling under pressure. In these situations rational thinking is less likely to inform decision making processes.

- Examine your value and belief systems. Are there any that may be embedded in unequal or harmful structures?
- Consider some actions that you can take to prevent bias from influencing decisions and interactions with learners.

Further reading, resources and professional learning

- Allport's Scale lesson plan: [http://the-classroom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Prejudice And Allport Scale.pdf-1.pdf](http://the-classroom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Prejudice%20And%20Allport%20Scale.pdf-1.pdf)
- Anti-racist terminology: <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/promotingraceequalityandantiracisteducation/terminology/>
- You Can Be, Zero Tolerance campaign to tackle gender stereotypes in early years: [You Can Be | Zero Tolerance](#)