

Do women need quotas to get to the top?

Level: Intermediate upwards

Timing: Approx. 90 minutes

Material needed: One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

Group size: Minimum of two students

Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 6/2010. The article is made up of two parts with two professionals, who have differing opinions, discussing whether quotas are necessary to help women get to the top of their professions and to increase the number of female executives and company board members.

The tasks in the student's notes will encourage the students to learn and use new business vocabulary and related functional language and to develop and practise (new) skills that could be useful in business situations, especially when discussing the topics of women in top business positions, equal opportunities and equal pay.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys, extension tasks and lesson plans.

Warmer

If the students do not understand the meaning of the word *quota* they will not be able to understand the point of the article and lesson plan. This warmer exercise is aimed at bringing the word and its meaning to their attention and allows the teacher to check that all students understand how it is used within a sentence.

Key:

1. a. quota; b. quota; c. quota(s)
2. The Macmillan Dictionary definition of 'quota' is 'an amount of something that someone is officially allowed to have or do'.

Key words and expressions

Divide the articles up in class so that half the students have the 'Yes' article and the other half have the 'No' article. Explain that their article does not have to reflect their personal opinion.

Tell the students that they should complete both the key words and expressions exercises that are connected with their text before reading the article.

The key words exercises have only one correct solution but the expressions exercises may have many. Explain that this is a communicative task and that the students should work together and discuss their answers with other students with the same article text.

Key:

Key words A:

1. gender
2. diversity
3. crude
4. appointments
5. governance

Key words B:

1. misconception
2. legislation
3. discrimination
4. incentive
5. groupthink

Expressions A:

1. 'the end justifies the means' is doing anything that is required to get the result you want, regardless of the methods used.
2. 'not-for-profit sector' refers to businesses that do not distribute their profits to shareholders or owners but instead use them to pursue its goals. These kinds of businesses include charities, government agencies and trade unions.
3. 'old boy network' usually refers to social and business connections among former pupils of male-only private schools.

Expressions B:

1. 'glass ceiling' is the term used to describe barriers that prevent women and minorities from advancing to management positions in corporations and organizations.
2. 'token appointments' and 'tokenism' refer to a policy or practice of limited inclusion of women or members of a minority group, to create an appearance of inclusive practices.
3. 'package of measures' is a set or collection of (related) actions or acts, procedures or processes that aim to change a situation.

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Teaching and learning strategy: Inductive learning

"Induction is the process of working out rules [or meaning] on the basis of examples. It is also called discovery learning ... the use of inductive procedures to work out rules [and meaning] from data has been promoted as a means of consciousness-raising. It is thought that the mental effort invested by learners pays dividends in terms of the long-term memory."

Scott Thornbury: *An A-Z of ELT*, Macmillan Books for Teachers (2006)

In the Task 2 expressions exercise, the students are asked to work out the meanings of English expressions by finding them in the text and deducing what they mean by studying the context. Finding the answers themselves, rather than choosing the correct answer from given choices will encourage the students to think more and talk more.

After Task 2, you might like to ask the students for feedback on the two parts of the task:

- Which part did they prefer completing and why?
- Which information and answers do they think they will still be able to recall next week?

Information exchange

This task has two parts. For part one, students can either work alone or with other student(s) who have read the same article. They should highlight or underline the main points and arguments in their article (regardless of whether they agree with them or not).

For part two, students should sit with someone who has read the other article. Both of the students should then summarize the contents of their article for the other student. Remind them that they should not read out their article, but instead, put it into their own words using the highlighted sections as prompts.

Additionally, the students should explain the key words and expressions from Task 2 of their article to their partner(s).

Discussion

Probably, by now, many of the students will have started to voice their own opinions about quotas to get women to the top.

Ask them to read the two quotes from Dr Roger Barker and Rowena Lewis and decide whether they agree with either of them. If their own opinion differs from both these opinions, ask them to write what they believe into the empty speech bubble in no more than 15 words.

Extension

To develop this task, either:

1. Ask students with the same opinions to sit together and strengthen their opinions and arguments.
2. Ask students with opposing opinions to sit together in pairs or small groups (equal numbers on both sides) and to try to convince each other to change their minds or at least see, and understand, the opposing point of view. or
3. Hold an open discussion in class.

Webquest

The aim of this task is for students to find out about women who have made it to the top of their professions, are members of a board of directors or hold leading positions in large companies. Once they have found some, they should each choose one that they would like to research in greater depth. Using their findings, they should write a short profile of the woman and present it to the other students.

Students could be asked to do this task for homework and to present their results in the next class.

Useful websites are:

<http://www.catalyst.org/publication/322/women-ceos-of-the-fortune-1000>

<http://top-10-list.org/2009/09/15/women-ceo-in-the-world/>

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1 Warmer

1. Which word from the title of this lesson fits into all the gaps in the sentences (in either its singular or plural form)?

- a. The total size of all mail messages stored on the server must not exceed the _____.
- b. The country has set a _____ on immigration.
- c. You will receive a large bonus if you meet your sales _____.

2. Write your own definition or example sentence for this word.

2 Working with a text

Student A

Do the key words and expressions tasks on the Article A worksheet. Then read the 'No' article in which Dr Roger Barker explains why he believes that women don't need a quota to succeed in business.

Student B

Do the key words and expressions tasks on the Article B worksheet. Then read the 'Yes' article in which Rowena Lewis expresses and supports her view that women would benefit from a quota.

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Article A

Key words and expressions

1. Before you read the article, match the key words from the text with their meanings.

crude appointments gender governance diversity

1. the fact of being either male or female _____
2. the fact that very different people or things exist within a group or place _____
3. not exact or accurate, but often still good enough for a particular purpose _____
4. the fact of being given new jobs, especially important ones _____
5. leadership of an organization _____

2. What do these expressions mean?

1. *the end justifies the means* _____
2. *not-for-profit sector* _____
3. *old boy network* _____

Do women need quotas to get to the top? by Vicki Sussens-Messerer



No!

Diversity, particularly on boards of directors, is very important because it provides different viewpoints. However, gender is not the only aspect of diversity – age, personality, professional background, expertise and nationality also need to be varied when creating a board. And, for a

particular business, some of these contrasting aspects will be more important than others. This is why gender quotas aren't a good idea: they're a very crude, one-size-fits-all approach to board diversity.

Quotas can undermine the authority of women. A lot of the women I talk to say they want to be recognized because of their own abilities and don't want any suspicion whatsoever that they owe their positions to anything other than that.

I think we all share the objective of increasing the number of women in positions of responsibility. But how do you achieve that? Often, the argument of those who support quotas is that the end justifies the means. But I don't think that is right. You have to use a means that is seen as legitimate in society. And it may be better to use an indirect approach that encourages greater variety in board appointments in general.

Most people who are elected onto boards were members of senior management. We need to recognize that people from all sorts of other professional backgrounds can also serve on boards. They could be leading academics or management consultants, or have played key roles in the not-for-profit or public sectors. Many women have leading positions in these areas.

The quotas in Norway have meant more women are now on boards. However, boards there have been appointing from a small group who did not, in fact, need the assistance. These women now find themselves in multiple board positions, which is not good governance, as we saw during the financial crisis. If directors are on too many boards, they can't focus their responsibilities.

The Institute of Directors wants to professionalize the whole board role, so that membership requirements are strict and based on knowledge and experience rather than an old boy network. We've developed the only professional qualification for directors, that of the chartered director, which will help not just women, but other under-represented groups, get onto boards.

DR ROGER BARKER is head of Corporate Governance at the Institute of Directors (IoD) in London.

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Article B

Key words and expressions

1. Before you read the article, match the key words from the text with their meanings.

discrimination groupthink legislation misconception incentive

- a wrong belief or opinion as a result of not understanding something _____
 - a law or a set of laws _____
 - unfair treatment of someone because of their gender, religion, race or other personal features _____
 - something that makes you want to do something or to work harder because you know that you will benefit by doing this _____
 - a concept that refers to faulty decision-making in a group _____
2. What do these expressions mean?
- glass ceiling _____
 - token appointments and tokenism _____
 - package of measures _____

Do women need quotas to get to the top? by Vicki Sussens-Messerer



Yes!

The most recent Female FTSE 100 report found that there had been an increase in the number of FTSE 100 companies with men-only boards of directors and a decline in the number of firms with female executive directors. Many years of tapping away have left the glass ceiling stubbornly intact. With women's representation dropping, or at best stagnating, we need bold action that can produce real change.

Norway was the first country in the world to introduce female quotas for boardrooms. Within six years, female board representation rose from 6% to 44%. Women on boards report that with their numbers increasing, women are increasingly valued for their contributions, rather than being seen as "token" appointments. Quotas can therefore help end talk of tokenism.

There is a concern that quotas will result in boards appointing the few women already holding board positions. This comes from the misconception that there is not enough female talent to meet the demand of boards. The lesson from Norway is that initial scepticism over the number of qualified women available for such positions ended when new legislation encouraged firms to "fish outside the pond". In Norway, the waters were found to be "better stocked than expected". I'm sure this would be true in the UK and elsewhere.

Yes, it is positive that women from the academic, educational and not-for-profit sectors are being brought onto company boards. But we cannot use the movement of women from outside business as an excuse to overlook the more serious problem of women not reaching leadership within business. The Fawcett Society strongly believes quotas must be part of a package of measures to obtain greater representation of women. Many other mechanisms – such as mentoring programmes, increasing awareness of discrimination and moving away from the informal approach to recruiting board members – have a part to play. However, many of these measures are already being tested, and progress in getting women to the top remains unacceptably slow. Quotas present an opportunity to create rapid change.

Boards must be given an incentive to alter the way they recruit and to choose diversity over groupthink. Only then will business be able to benefit from a more diverse source of talent and to set free the full potential of women's leadership.

ROWENA LEWIS is the head of fundraising and development at the Fawcett Society, which campaigns for "equality between women and men in the UK on pay, pensions, justice and politics".

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3 Information exchange

1. Highlight or underline the main points and arguments in your article.
2. Work with a partner who has read the other article. Exchange information about the articles using the sections you have highlighted.

4 Discussion

Read the quotes in the speech bubbles.

Quotas can undermine the authority of women.

Dr Roger Barker

We need bold action that can produce real change.

Rowena Lewis

Who do you agree with more: Dr Roger Barker or Rowena Lewis? If you have a different opinion, write it in the empty speech bubble.

5 Webquest

Search the internet for women CEOs who have made it to the top of their profession. Choose one and write a short profile. If you are not sure where to start looking, search using some of the key words in the box below.

Fortune 1000 women CEOs glass ceiling
female executives female boardmembers

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Vocabulary record: Do women need quotas to get to the top?

verb	noun	adjective (+ opposite)	adverb (+ opposite)
diversify			
	management		
		qualified	
			stubbornly

Vocabulary record

