



Diversity Case Study – Bernie Woollard

Bernie has a BA Jt Hons in Economics and Agricultural Economics from Nottingham University and a PGCE from Warwick University. He is currently a primary school teacher.

My gender has never been an issue. Indeed being a male in a primary school is a positive advantage because there are less of us around. In practical terms you become a bit of a role model or father figure...particularly to boys and girls from one parent families. Academically this can be a positive influence on many children.

I have never encountered any discrimination by gender. I have only ever encountered mild age discrimination when I worked for a small bank for a short period. I have yet to encounter any age discrimination in teaching...again a mature outlook combined with vibrant, energetic teaching is a positive advantage!

When I encountered age discrimination at the bank I always raised my eyebrows slightly and treated it with the contempt it deserved. My usual riposte to (usually younger male) protagonists was to ask them what they planned to be doing when they were in their 50's. Their usual response was that they intended to get to the top and to get rich. My reply went along the lines of inviting them to look around and see how many people currently fitted that bill (very few!) I then invited them to start both planning and working harder in order to achieve their ambitions...and pay for my future pension in the process. This was usually enough to silence even the most talkative!

Firstly try to find career areas where your efforts and achievements will be truly valued – teaching is an excellent example of this, although I occasionally read in the TES that there can be rare exceptions. Secondly try to find a school where you are on the same wavelength as the Head Teacher. A good Head is worth her / his weight in gold. They really do shape both the outcomes and day to day life in the school. Thirdly I think it's fair to say that most people will encounter some form of discrimination in their lives. Thankfully this is something that is becoming more and more frowned upon. My advice would always be true to yourself and to offer a truly hard working and professional face to the world. There will always be work for good teachers. In the final event if you are in an unbearable situation, the teaching unions will always support you in a genuine case. The main thing is to enjoy your job. You will spend a long time doing it (literally in teaching!) If you can achieve this then most other distractions just fade away.