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Call for Corporate Policy Changes: Addressing the Gender Pay Gap Requires 'More than a Mindset Shift'

26 August 2021: The past decade has seen seismic shifts in societal consciousness around women's rights and issues around gender equality, among them being the matter of the gender pay gap in South Africa. Most recently, the [World Economic Forum's](#) assessment of equality in the workplace suggested that closing the divide will take around 135 years to rectify. Previously that figure stood at just under 100 years, but COVID and rapid digitalisation has served to widen the gap. As a woman I can't wait that long! Closing the gender pay gap in South Africa is going to require a concerted and collective effort from companies across sectors, together with government and an active civil society to support fundamental policy reform within the workplace.

This is the opinion of Dr Veronique Genniker, Marang Education Trust Director at Pearson South Africa who explains that: "We need to see gender equality in the workplace as an integral part of both the corporate strategy and the broader diversity and inclusion conversation. As a company, we've realised that real change needs to be driven by top leadership that enables active and persistent efforts by every department in the business to support women through focused programs of advancement and to recruit more women in senior roles, support women in those roles, use our recruitment strategies to tackle gender inequality and make genuine cultural changes to accommodate the unique needs of women."

The reality is that there is a substantial divide between the relatively lower earnings of women when compared to that of men on the same level. This is true of a range of industries and is certainly not a phenomenon that is unique to South Africa. Pearson United Kingdom has led the charge towards reporting on the [gender pay gap](#) with a report that shows its commitment to reducing this gap. Year on year, the median gender pay gap has decreased to 10% from its 2017 median of 15%.

The report reaffirms Pearson group's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. It has recommitted to publishing a gender pay gap report not just in the UK, but globally. As Genniker expands, "We've extracted several learnings from the report produced by the UK, among them being that as a learning company, we are strategically positioned to directly tackle gender bias and stereotyping in education. This is a goal that will require change not only within our corporate structure but also in the way we design our products and services. We are committed to producing textbooks, educational resources and services that will enable children across South Africa to have access to quality learning that is cognisant of the inclusion of all people."

"We cannot inculcate a spirit of gender equality in our workplaces simply by shifting our mindsets. We have to action, measure and report to publicly show how serious we are about the gender pay gap! The shifts therefore need to happen on the level of policy, implemented with the focus of inclusion, measured and reported to ensure we are genuinely including and advancing women into top leadership positions with decent pay to sustain our DE&I agenda Genniker comments. As such Pearson South Africa, in line with the group's global objectives aims to address the gender pay gap by improving focused advancement with recruitment and pipeline management to enhance senior female representation, reshaping work-from-home policies and mentoring women in their respective roles to thrive and be role models.

2020 and 2021 have been pivotal years for the diversity, equity and inclusion imperatives. The movement towards a work-from home system and a "new normal" in the workplace has the potential to level the playing field in terms of gender equality, as the report suggests. Pearson South Africa sees itself as being at the forefront of these societal changes, given the fundamental role that education plays in building and shaping society. As Genniker explains: "We're willing to go the distance as a company, as is evident in the number of female directors, to ensure that we take our role in promoting positive change seriously."

About Pearson

Dr. Veronique Genniker is the Director Marang Education Trust, in partnership with Pearson. She holds a PhD in Education Psychology, Master's in Science Education, Postgraduate in Leadership and a Higher Teaching Diploma. PMET is the flagship Social Impact Programme of Pearson South Africa. PMET provides quality research based, accredited integrated personal & professional development training, coaching and mentoring to under resourced deep rural schools across South Africa together with fully funded under-graduate bursaries. She has 33 years of experience working across all levels within the education system, proudly regards herself as a social change agent, member of a women empowerment organisation and board member of the National Association of Social Change Entities in Education. She serves on Pearson's International Council as a Diversity and Inclusive Advocate, is a lead in the Middle East and Africa's Women in Learning and Leadership Chapter and a Global Well-Being Champion. She thrives on coaching leadership teams and mentoring young women. Her international experience includes Advanced Science and Leadership at the University of Kent in England and

France. Rotary International Alumni in the Netherlands and California USA. Advanced Environmental Education at the University of Uppsala and Malmo in Sweden and Denmark. Presenter at Houston Independent School District in Texas USA, Pearson Academy in Melbourne Australia and participated in Efficacy and Partnership Forums in Singapore and Doha. In 2018 she received a Global Award for Excellence in Leadership from the Women's Economic Forum in New Delhi India. In 2019 she was awarded 2 global Pan African Awards for Africa's Most Influential Women in Education and Training and partook in the Business Women's Association of South Africa's Dialogue with the President of South Africa. In 2020 she presented at the International Congress of School Effectiveness and Improvement in Morocco and at the Women's Economic Forum in Egypt and Turkey.