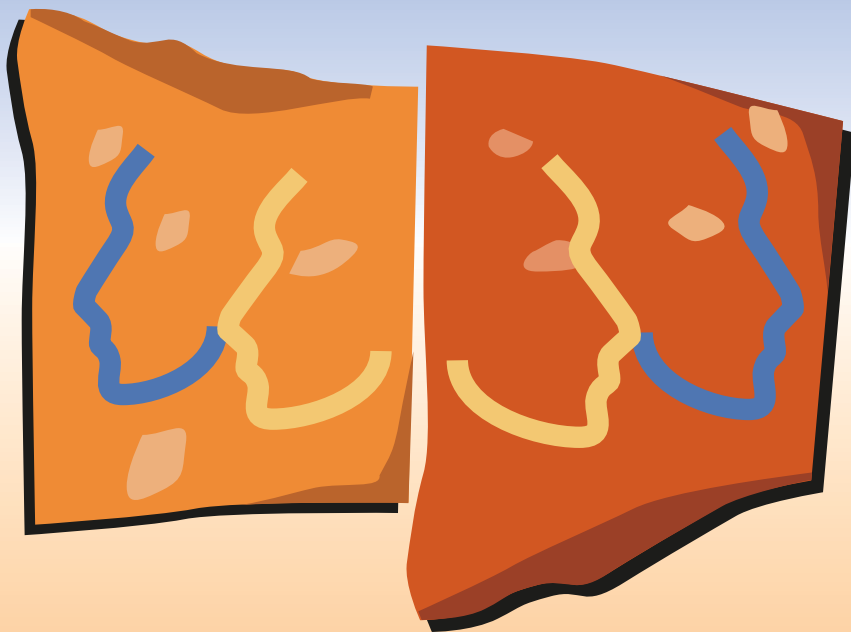


Difficult but doable



- *Good practices for equality work*

Kristiina Brunila ■ Mervi Heikkinen ■ Pirkko Hynninen



mirror



Difficult but doable

- Good practices for equality work

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FOREWORD

According to various project registers, more than two hundred education, training and development projects have been implemented in Finland over the past decades. So how come inequality still persists? On two occasions, the European Commission has criticised Finland about the distinct gender division of the labour market into men's jobs and women's jobs. The Commission has also called for measures by Finland to address the situation. This phenomenon that illustrates the division into men's and women's labour markets is called segregation.

Two Finnish EQUAL-funded equality projects – the development initiatives WomenIT and Mirror – have looked for the answer to our initial question. An excellent opportunity for this was presented within the National Thematic Network *Desegregation in the Labour Market*. Our objective has been to find new solution models and proposals for measures by analysing related projects that have already been completed or are currently underway and to launch a dialogue with equality actors, researchers, political decision-makers and government representatives. Our further objective has been to disseminate the good practices and results created in the work of the network and in research.

A Steering Group and Secretariat were appointed for the National Thematic Network, researchers were selected and a research group was appointed to support the work. The key issue in the thematic work was to find out what needs to be changed, which practices need to be strengthened and which measures need to be applied to achieve permanent results.

The Steering Group had the task of steering and monitoring the work of the Thematic Network. The members of the Group represented various sectors in society, and the Group aimed at genuine dialogue and practical influencing. Efforts have been made to influence through the Steering Group the mainstreaming of equality projects, the testing of practices which promote equality in reality as well as national policies in order to advance equality and establish it in the various operating structures of society.

The Secretariat consisted of representatives of the development partnerships WomenIT and Mirror. Its task was to coordinate and assume responsibility for practical implementation. Those representing WomenIT in the Secretariat were Marja-Leena Haataja, Project Coordinator, and Eila Ilkko and Ritvaleena Leinonen, Project Secretaries, and Mirror was represented by Kirsti Miettinen, Project Manager, and Tea von Flittner, Project Assistant.

Research has been an important element in the National Thematic Network. Research was hoped to take us below the surface and help us find answers to the above question. We started from the point that it was time to analyse previous functions in order to locate the interface where equality fades or disappears while also discovering the good practices that have already been created. This book describes this process. The research work was carried out by Kristiina Brunila, Mervi Heikkinen and Pirkko Hynninen.

The Network was made up of other actors working on the theme invited along. Consisting of a couple of hundred people, this group met at two seminars where they exchanged experiences about the premises and preliminary results of the research and other topical issues. The Network was also supported by an online newsletter.

Experiences and recommendations

- Participation in the work of a steering group must be based on genuine interest. A steering group must not have too many members or be representative. Changes in the members of a steering group pose a challenge with regard to deeper interaction.
- The Secretariat has been responsible for administrative issues, which has provided the Steering Group with the freedom to focus on substance.
- Organising the thematic work has been one of the biggest challenges. Those engaged in thematic work have been working in different parts of Finland, whereby contacts have been based mainly on e-mail and telephone. It might have been good to get together more often, but the schedule did not allow this.
- Equality is a cross-cutting theme in all EQUAL projects, so thematic working groups should be appointed on a principle other than gathering the representatives of the same theme in the same working group as the latter alternative does not necessarily promote mainstreaming.


We hope this book will provide food for thought, answers and new tools for equality work. Assessing the experiences gained in previous projects on a scale this extensive is both new and valuable in Finland. This research shows that equality work has also produced results and created good practices. This book would not have been possible without a lot of work and capable people. We would like to thank the members of the Steering Group, particularly its Chairperson Pauliina Lampinen, Project Manager at the VATES Foundation, and Ritva Hakkarainen, Project Counsellor at the Ministry of Labour.

Equality work very often consists of small things but, on the other hand, it also requires action at the political level.

Marja-Leena Haataja
WomenIT

Kirsti Miettinen
Mirror


Kajaani and Helsinki before Christmas 2004

 The overall objective of the **MIRROR** project is to find ways of strengthening the motivation of girls to study mathematics, science and technology and to develop teaching methods and contents that support this at all levels of education.

A further objective of the project is to increase the knowledge of young people, their parents, teachers and guidance counsellors of technology and the educational opportunities and occupations in the sector.

The project is implemented as a network of eight independent subprojects coordinated by Technology Industries of Finland. It ends in May 2005.

For further information, please visit www.mirror4u.net

 **WomenIT – Women in Industry and Technology.** The WomenIT project aims at eradicating the gender segregation of working life into women's and men's jobs and tasks. The objective is to exert national and European-wide influence on the structures, operating models and policies that maintain this segregation and at the same time cause inequality in other parts of society.

The operating environment of the WomenIT project has covered day care centres, schools, upper secondary education institutions, polytechnics, universities, businesses and labour market organisations. These organisations have more than forty different clubs, courses, training events and research and development activities that encourage girls and women to embrace technology and enter the fields of technology as well as motivate them to advance in their careers.

Close cooperation and interaction with national and international partners as well as researchers and experts has enabled the utilisation of the latest knowledge in all development and modelling.

The WomenIT – Women in Industry and Technology – project is implemented and coordinated by the Kajaani University Consortium of the University of Oulu. The project was launched in late 2001 and ends in April 2006.

For further information, please visit www.womenit.info

PROLOGUE

This book is a contribution to discussion on gender equality. It was written on the basis of research on equality projects implemented over the past thirty years. Our aim was to study why the results of equality projects and the practices created in them would not spread. Identifying the obstacles to the advancement of equality and finding tools to eliminate these obstacles became the practical research objective.

Mervi Heikkinen and Kristiina Brunila began to collect research data in June 2003. First, they surveyed education and working life equality projects from the 1970s until 2003. Around three hundred projects were found. Those either directly or indirectly aiming towards desegregation in working life and directly or indirectly dealing with technology or its applications were selected for closer analysis. The survey showed that the same actors had been involved in many of the projects over the years. Their long and diverse experience was conveyed into the research data through the interviews made by Mervi and Kristiina, who also interviewed activists who were or had been involved in individual projects. (Appendices 1 and 2)

General obstacles to equality and indicators of inequality include pay differences and problems related to the reconciliation of paid work and non-working life. The pay differences have an impact on the opportunities in women's non-working life all the way into retirement age as social security is tied to income. Even as pensioners, women are on average poorer than men.

The gender division of labour that causes inequality has been discussed for a long time. In the course of time, the gender segregation of jobs and tasks has been manifested in different forms, and ideas and views about women's and men's capabilities and tasks have varied in terms of content while the segregation itself has persisted quite strongly. Over the past century, there have been points in time where public discussion has resulted in changes in legislation and administration. These points coincide with major socioeconomic changes. It may be said that the negotiations have focused on women's education and right to paid work. Over and over again, women's education has evoked sentiments that have often been strong. Women have been seen as a threat to existing hierarchies.

Time and time again, paid work and (unpaid) household work have been juxtaposed. Women have been and still are perceived as gendered beings whose characteristics, which have been defined as inborn, have been assessed in relation to societal needs. It has been presumed that women are not intelligent enough to study or that their physique cannot take the strain. Ever since women's higher education became more common and was "normalised" in the 1950s, doubts about their competence sometimes as medical researchers sometimes as primary school teachers have been voiced. Women's employment had to be justified all the way up to the 1960s and 1970s, which is when it became somewhat normal. In the labour market, however, women are treated as a flexible labour force. In the 1980s, the employment situation required women's participation in paid labour. During the 1990s recession, ideological talk about stay-at-home mothers accelerated once again. In the early 2000s, "the knowledge society" is inviting women into technology jobs while women's proportion in the labour force has taken a downturn.

The labour market has undergone a major change in the past fifteen years. There is great variation in the terms and conditions of paid work, and different types of fixed-term and temporary employment have become particularly common. Such contracts are increasingly common among young, well-educated women. This is problematic for the advancement of equality. The keys to this problem are held by the state and the labour market organisations.



Political will to eradicate one of the key obstacles to the advancement of equality seems to have increased a little in the Finnish Government's Equality Programme 2004–2007: it facilitates the reconciliation of paid work and non-working life. A lot will, however, need to be done to prevent gendered parenting and the accumulation of the care responsibilities outside paid work onto women. The Programme also includes policies towards the closing of the gender pay gap.

Reducing inequality requires a strong political will. To aid its creation, we wish to take a look at gender itself as gender perceptions seem to have a major impact on the progress made towards equality.

Gender and the related issues often arouse strong sentiments. The perception of the genders as two inherently different beings easily results in comparisons and juxtapositions. In practice, difference and disparity get created in education, working life as well as other areas of life. This also appears to be an obstacle to equality that is hard to overcome.

According to our research, another obstacle is related to the hierarchical form of organisation, and management and leadership practices in particular. This as such creates inequality and, coupled with the perception of two different and unequal genders, efficiently prevents the advancement of equality.

At first, we will present the results of the survey phase of our equality project. We have divided research, development and training projects and other measures promoting equality into two groups: one for projects mainly under the education administration and the other for projects focusing on working life. This division is partly artificial as education and training projects are implemented in working life and some of the working life projects are education or training projects.

Next, we will discuss gender, particularly in technological development. Organisations also get a chapter of their own where we examine how gender is produced and maintained in organisational structures and processes. In each chapter, we propose good practices for the context, including examples based on our material. We would like to point out that names of the interviewees have been changed in the interview excerpts. Finally, we will take an introductory look at the lifespan of a project aimed at promoting equality.

The research on equality measures that forms the basis for this publication would not exist without those who planned it. We would like to thank Elina Lahelma, Leena Teräs and Marja Vehviläinen. These three, together with Vappu Sunnari, Helena Karasti and Päivi Korvajärvi, provided vital support to the initial stage of our research, so our warm thanks go to them. Many thanks to the interviewees, too! Our thanks are also due to the Steering Group and the Secretariat of the National Thematic Network for inspiring discussions, and special thanks to Ritvaleena Leinonen for help, support and encouragement. We are, however, solely responsible for this publication written on the basis of our research. Writing as a team is challenging and time-consuming but at the same time rewarding. The concept of knowledge construction as a social process becomes concrete. Ideas, interpretations and at best even the way things are put into words take shape in a dialogue where it is both impossible and needless to locate the one who originally presented the thought. Physical distance – with Mervi in Oulu, Kristiina partly in Kirkkonummi and Pirkko in Helsinki – contributed to the shaping of the tightly scheduled process – network connections and information technology can also bring surprises along.

Kristiina Brunila, Mervi Heikkinen and Pirkko Hynninen

In cyberspace on 20 January 2005





EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROJECTS

Project survey

We found around one hundred projects aimed at desegregation in education and training that were implemented during the period studied. The latest and especially EU-funded projects were easy to find on the Internet. The earliest projects were found in literature, the press and interviews of those involved in equality work conducted as part of the research project.¹ A few people responded to an e-mail questionnaire in summer 2003² and told about ongoing projects, inventories, surveys³ and existing project registers⁴.

Equality projects in the field of education and training have actualised in social movements.⁵ Issues such as desegregation in the labour market and responding to the anticipated shortage of labour in the technology sector have appeared among project objectives. The underrepresentation of women in the fields of science, technology and industry has been seen as a problem for equality, and contents with a focus on technology have been typical. On the other hand, the small number of men in education and training jobs has been regarded as a problem, but this has not been a particular object of desegregation. Labour market segregation can be seen as an indicator of inequality. Projects have aimed at abolishing the segregation that compulsory education openly and systematically created in its early days.⁶ Many projects have sought to directly influence the choice of subjects and further education through educational guidance and counselling. There have also been pedagogical experiments with a special aim of influencing girls' perceptions of their own capacities and themselves as learners. Furthermore, schools have tried out both single-gender groups in the teaching of certain subjects as well as mixed groups in crafts and physical education.⁷

Desegregation in education

When the promotion of gender equality was adopted as an objective of education in the late 1970s, gender was dispelled from the curricula and the organisation of education. Neutral talk about pupils and students did not, however, manage to eradicate the gender division. Information campaigns to affect choices did not help much, either. Alongside with neutrality, orientation towards the advancement of women grew stronger in Finland, too. This was influenced by international movements and related campaigns and programmes⁸ as well as agreements and conventions. In the 1980s, several cooperation and research networks on education and gender were created at the national, Nordic and later also European levels.⁹ A rise in women's educational level did not seem to have an impact on their average status in society, of which the vertical gender segregation was and still is a good indicator. Segregation was a clearer and clearer indicator of disparity.

In order to implement the equality objective included in legislation on education, in 1983 the Ministry of Education appointed a committee to assess the experimental and research activities supporting the objective, launch experiments and draw up a proposal on the implementation of the equality objective set in legislation. The committee's mandate expressly specifies the objective of "widening the career choices of girls and boys". The committee stated that promoting equality in the education system called for a reform in thinking and practices. The objective was



to incorporate the equality perspective in all school development, curricula and the practices of education institutions.¹⁰

The committee surveyed previous and ongoing Nordic experiments¹¹ and commissioned a survey on research¹². It planned and organised experimental and research activities in cooperation with the National Board of Education and the National Board of Vocational Education¹³ towards gender desegregation specifically in relation to equality issues in formal education. During its term, the committee organised several¹⁴ seminars¹⁵ and launched a discussion about gender equality issues in education. The final report of the committee presents the reasons and proposals for measures towards the promotion of equality in education and training organisations.¹⁶

The committee implemented equality experiments in five municipalities and towns around Finland¹⁷. The BRYT project (1985–1989) launched by the Equality Committee of the Nordic Council of Ministers was implemented in time to be included in the survey commissioned by the Finnish committee. The project explored and tried out tools for eradicating gender-based labour segregation and advancing the status of women in the Nordic countries. The authorities of all of the Nordic countries were involved in the project, which also aimed at developing methods to widen girls' career choices and support women's employment. In addition to the Nordic Council of Ministers, the project was co-funded by the national labour administrations. At the national level, the project activities were targeted and planned to be implemented within the area of one medium-sized labour district. These included experimental schools, adult education and a workplace experiments, aiming at enabling a dialogue between the various levels of actors in education and labour administration. The idea behind the project experiments related to education was that schools as parts of society's education system produce women and men who slot into the societal (gendered) labour segregation. Therefore the segregation is cultural rather than biological. Efforts were made to widen the scope of occupations regarded as possible by studying and analysing different occupations. Thirteen-year-olds were introduced to working life, the issues affecting their choice of occupation and job, the opportunities to change these as well as the differences between women and men's life cycles through home assignments they completed with their parents. Fourteen-year-olds visited their parents' workplaces for a day. The principle behind familiarising 15-year-olds with working life was to allow every pupil to familiarise themselves for one week with a male-dominated sector and another week with a female-dominated sector. 16-year-olds attending the first year of general upper secondary school spent two days familiarising themselves with working life: one in a male-dominated workplace and the other in a female-dominated one. Girls studying the advanced syllabus in physics were supported in their efforts to find access to traineeships. Women technology professionals and students told 17-year-old general upper secondary school pupils about their work and studies. Familiarisation with working life included systematic cooperation with workplace representatives, intensified cooperation with them and teachers as well as close cooperation between schools and homes.¹⁸ Practices piloted and developed in the project have later been applied in other projects.¹⁹

In the 1985 national core curriculum, the promotion of gender equality was left for educational guidance and counselling, and the same applied to 1994. This dimension is not extensive enough to cover the equality obligation set for basic education. Instead, the focus was on one area: desegregation in working life. It seems that wide-scale projects towards equality still fail to have been implemented in Finland.²⁰ The 2004 national core curriculum extends the promotion of equality to cover teaching in general.²¹

Work falling under the category of women's studies was carried out alongside the projects – partly by the same persons. The work of the equality experiment

committee brought together researchers problematising gender in the fields of education and training at the national level. In 1987, some of them organised themselves into a cooperation group on education and gender with the help of funding to support networking from the Academy of Finland. The research group launched an extensive ethnographic study on school practices in 1994,²² and in the same year the network adopted the name EDI – Education and Difference.²³

The proposal by the equality experiment committee regarding the development of teacher training was implemented under the NORD-LILIA project of the Nordic Council of Ministers (1992–1994)²⁴. The goal of the project was to incorporate gender equality issues into teacher training curricula.²⁵ In Finland, its impacts on the development of teacher training towards equality promotion were local²⁶ and in part short-lived. The gradual increase of women's studies within the educational sciences has produced expertise that has enabled the inclusion of studies in gender issues into the degree requirements. At many universities, teacher trainees have been able to minor in women's studies. A long-cherished idea about addressing gender in the contents and practices of teacher training has not materialised comprehensively by the time we are writing this in 2005. Instead, studies on the subject depend on the students' own interest.

Equality projects in education and training have been implemented at the national level, especially at universities and their continuing education centres. In 1995, an equality centre was established in Vantaa to act as a centre for project work. During its five years of existence, the centre produced adult education related to equality and engaged in cooperation under education and training research projects and with schools. The Kajaani Continuing Education Centre has acted as a local project innovator ever since the first equality experiment in 1985 and has later been the centre for many projects. During Finland's membership in the European Union, the EU-funded BERTA project²⁷ (1996–1998) implemented by the Vantaa and Kajaani centres supported women's entry into management and leadership positions in education and training²⁸, too, in an effort towards eradicating vertical gender segregation in the field. The goal of the BERTA project was to tackle gender segregation in education and working life and to develop training and labour market services sensitive to women's needs in particular. The project included a training programme building the capacities of career and guidance counsellors for gender sensitive analysis of career planning and life cycles.²⁹

Examining the equality and gender perceptions

■ *"Progress. And sometimes it just annoys you so much 'cause you don't feel like going on and on about the same things. Recently, especially with EU projects and others, they've been using the same terms to talk about things as we did almost ten years ago. We were at it way too early. Now we'd get funding for projects that we were proposing then. Now they themselves have started to say that someone could launch a project like this." Monika (F)*

The Nordic countries are a special forum for equality policies in the European Union. When Sweden and Finland joined the EU in 1995, high expectations were placed on them with regard to equality issues³⁰. Nevertheless, Finland has ended up being advised by the EU to consider the reasons for gender segregation in the labour market and ways of dissolving it.³¹ EU Structural Funds have been a nationally significant source of funding for projects aimed at labour market desegregation.³² Generally speaking, the number of different projects has increased along with the increase in project funding opportunities available. However, this cannot be



regarded as a direct increase in resources but rather as EU-driven financial and administrative policies where funds paid to the EU are directed through structural funds into various projects. Measures have called for international partnership, as a result of which cooperation and interaction has increased among actors within the EU. Reciprocally, internationalisation has strengthened locality and the sensitivity to recognise special regional issues. Network projects have also been implemented to make current equality issues in Northern areas and peripheries visible and focus attention on them.³³

Technology facilitating gender desegregation

Efforts have been made to launch gender desegregation at stages as early as pre-school and elementary education by organising technology projects. The WomenIT project includes five subprojects aimed at this age group.³⁴ As a practical measure in basic education, girls have been encouraged or been obliged to participate in science or technology education. Assessments on girls' images of technology have been made in both the Tietonaisia I and II³⁵ projects and the Mirror project Learn³⁶. Girls' keenness to study at general upper secondary school has also been questioned, and vocational education has been presented as a noteworthy alternative. Vocational programmes providing training for technology and industrial occupations have been involved in the projects, enabling attention to pedagogical arrangements. Earlier choices of subjects may have restricted the development of basic skills needed in the training programme in question. Equality projects have attempted to lower the threshold by designing courses preparing for vocational training to ensure full participation in training from the very beginning. Implemented by the Department of Electrical and Communications Engineering of the Helsinki University of Technology, the TiINA³⁷ project has developed the training provided by the Department towards better consideration for the growing number of female students. Attention has been paid to methods, policies and contents, creating professional identities and networks of interaction that support studies through work in pairs and small groups and mentoring. Leonardo da Vinci is a European Union programme for the development of vocational training in Europe. It supports European mobility and development projects furthering basic, further and continuing vocational training. Cooperation between educational institutions and working life has a key role in the programme. The Virtual Exchange³⁸ project supports the exchange of female students for international work placements in male-dominated fields. All in all, technology applications have been widely available to the project actors, their use has diversified and the project websites have become extensive material and databanks. In the HiL@dies project³⁹, students have had online mentors, and participating students set up an online business. The WomenIT project has maintained a closed web environment to support interaction between the actors in the equality project, studies, project administration and the distribution of material produced⁴⁰. The products of the Mirror project can be downloaded from the project website.⁴¹

Women's studies producing information about gender and sexuality

In the 1990s, the establishment of women's studies and other issues have strengthened research on education, training and gender, and expertise has increased nationwide. New projects in the early years of the 2000s have been able to support the methods and practices formulated in previous projects with research on school practices, which is something that had been proposed by the equality experiment committee years earlier. An obstacle to progress towards equality in the field of education and training that still remains practically unaddressed is sexual harassment. There are special projects on it within higher education, but the work is only about to begin in basic and upper secondary education. Gendered power and violence has been a theme shared by the women's movement since the 1990s⁴², uniting the actors on a global level⁴³. Violence against women has been condemned as the greatest human rights scandal of our times⁴⁴ and therefore the greatest obstacle to equality.⁴⁵

The Nordic Council of Ministers has funded research projects under the Gender and Power programme (2000–2004), including the Finnish projects Gendered Violence in Schools and Teacher Education in the Barents Region⁴⁶. Projects on gendered power and violence have also undertaken to study the images of masculinity, femininity and sexuality as these are mutually constructing to a great extent. The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health funded a five-year project to prevent violence against women and prostitution (1998–2002)⁴⁷, with its products including teaching material for schools on identifying and addressing intimate partner violence.⁴⁸ The Academy of Finland has funded research projects under its programme Power, Violence and Gender (2000–2003), including a research project on gendered power relations and violence in schools and teacher training⁴⁹. Training and teaching materials on gendered and sexualised violence have been produced in the Aware projects funded by the EU programme Daphne.⁵⁰ The GLEE project⁵¹ has created a network for sexual diversity in teacher training, curriculum development and related research. A special objective of the project is to combat homophobia⁵² and heterosexism⁵³. The project has been funded by the European Commission, and it is part of the Socrates Comenius programme targeted at schools.

The Act on Equality between Women and Men placing an obligation on all education professionals

During the past thirty years, national equality work has been about becoming organised – networking and professionalisation in equality expertise and agency. Equality work activists, seasoned equality actors and researchers in women's studies have on a scale further than the projects sought to influence social decisions specifying the conditions of education. A key actor in this is the women's movement, which has been working towards a more equal society in Finland over the past century. During the past thirty years, multisectoral networks have carried out education, training, research and development work and integrated themselves into political decision-making bodies to effect towards change. The WomenIT and Mirror projects have entered various administrative arenas and, on the other hand, invited actors from various sectors into the project Steering Group, conferences and training events.⁵⁴

The projects have developed documented good practices. Curricula and their contents can be pinpointed as one of the obstacles to these spreading wider. A curriculum is an ethical value judgement contributing to the conscious or unconscious construction of attitudes towards issues including technological development, responsibility for the preservation of life as well as the wellbeing of humans and other living beings. The development of comprehensive education is directed by the labour market situation.⁵⁵ Active orientation towards a technological information society is apparent in the national core curriculum for basic education with its emphasis on technology contents⁵⁶. In the 2000s, education is bringing up members of the information society.⁵⁷ In the early days of compulsory education in Finland, one of the tools for creating separate male and female citizenship was girls' and boys' crafts. Despite the new neutral terms used today, crafts subjects still produce segregation. Research on school practices has found that – on a scale wider than the subject – the activities of the entire basic education are directed by unquestioned gendered processes: gendered structures and processes where gender is constructed partly through hierarchy, power and violence. Professionals who are specified in the curricula of teacher training and basic education and engaged in guidance counselling are subject to legislation, and it is their official duty to observe it. The Equality Act obliges educational institutions to "provide equal opportunities for education and occupational advancement for women and men, and ensure that instruction, research and instructional material promote the fulfilment of the aim of this Act".⁵⁸ On the basis of their education and training, those working in the field of education should be able to implement the statutory obligation to ensure gender sensitivity in providing education and supporting pupils'



vocational development. However, gender awareness in education alone is not enough: gender awareness must also exist in working life and other organisations to enable the advancement of equality.

Notes

- ¹ Long-term equality actors in education and training. Appendix 1.
- ² Do you know of an equality project? We carried out an e-mail questionnaire on the Finnish national women's studies mailing list and received twelve responses.
- ³ Salonen, Alina (1988) and Tasavertaiset työmarkkinat -työryhmän muistio.
- ⁴ The Finnish Government joint project register (HARE), the database on ESF projects.
- ⁵ Cf. Holli 2003, equality work actualised in social movements.
- ⁶ Tuomaala, Saara (2004), Sunnari Vappu (1997b).
- ⁷ E.g. equality experiment in teaching crafts and other home-making skills (1985–1987), the equality education development project at Kajaani schools (1985–86, 1986–1989), the equality experiment (1983–1986) at Vaasa Borgaregatsans skola school (1986–1987), the Nordic BRYT project (1985–1989), see Salonen, Alina 1988.
- ⁸ Constructing a welfare state, the UN International Women's Year 1975 and the ensuing Decade for Women (1976–85) was an era when equality issues were established in the mandates of political and administrative bodies. It saw assessments and experiments on equality by bodies including the Council for Equality (Tasa-arvoasiain neuvottelukunta tasa-arvon tiennäyttäjänä. Tavoitteita, tuloksia, tuokio-kuvia 1972–1997. Tasa-arvoasiain neuvottelukunta).
- ⁹ Conferences such as the working group on Gender and education of the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) have offered forums for networking.
- ¹⁰ Tasa-arvokokeilutoimikunnan mietintö 1988:17.
- ¹¹ Salonen, Alina (1988).
- ¹² Lahelma, Elina (1987).
- ¹³ The National Board of Vocational Education in cooperation with the National Board of General Education published a series of three books to promote greater attention to gender equality in educational institutions governed by them. Published in Finnish, these books dealt with gender equality in history (Sukupuolten tasa-arvo historiassa, 1984) and gender equality in education and training and working life published within the same covers (Sukupuolten tasa-arvo koulutuksessa ja työelämässä, 1986).
- ¹⁴ 18 seminars, Appendix 2, Tasa-arvokokeilutoimikunnan mietintö 1988:17.
- ¹⁵ E.g. Kiltit tytöt – kovat kundit. Raportti tasa-arvokokeilutoimikunnan mietinnöstä eri koulutusorgansiaatioilta saaduista lausunnoista ja kansainvälisen nuorisovuoden komitean järjestämästä seminaarista 12.1.1985 (Kiltit tytöt – kovat kundit, 1986).
- ¹⁶ Tasa-arvokomitean mietintö 1988:17. A summary of the me orandums of the equality experiment committee on statements by various educational organisations was published in Finnish in 1989 (Lahelma, Elina 1989). The equality working groups of the Ministry of Education published a report on equality issues in vocational education (Opetusministeriön tasa-arvotyö ryhmän ammatillisen koulutuksen tasa-arvoraportti 1989, in Finnish). Equality work and public discussion on it continued with the drawing up of the operational equality plan of the Ministry of Education in 1991. (Suunnitellusti tasa-arvoon. Raportti Opetusministeriön, Helsingin yliopiston Vantaan täydennyskoulutuslaitoksen ja Suomen Kaupunkiliiton 22.5.1991 järjestämästä seminaarista.)
- ¹⁷ Salonen, Alina (1988).
- ¹⁸ Räsänen, Leila (1988), the Nordic BRYT project.
- ¹⁹ E.g. NORD-LILIA, BERTA, SUUNTO, WomenIT, MIRROR.
- ²⁰ Cf. Salonen, Alina (1988). The equality experiment committee found that projects implemented in Finland, including the various integration experiments in crafts subjects and the family education experiments, can be interpreted as initial steps towards this direction.
- ²¹ "In the instruction (...) gender equality is promoted by giving girls and boys the ability to act on the basis of equal rights and responsibilities in society, working life and family life." The national core curriculum for basic education 2004, 12.
- ²² Gordon, Hynninen, Lahelma, Metso, Palmu & Tolonen (2000).
- ²³ <http://www.helsinki.fi/koukero/english/index.htm>
- ²⁴ Gender and Equality as Quality in School and Teacher Education. The final report from the 3-year Nordic project on gender and equal opportunities in teacher education. (1995)
- ²⁵ Eroja ja yhtäläisyyksiä. Sukupuoli pedagogisessa ajattelussa ja käytännössä. (1999)

- ²⁶ Sunnari, Vappu (1997a) Can it really mean us? Nord-Lilia Project in Oulu Finland.
- ²⁷ Lönn, Hillevi (1999).
- ²⁸ Kristiina Kumpulainen's manuscript in Finnish on research based on training aimed at women on supporting leadership and management in schools under the Berta project.
- ²⁹ Korhonen, Päivi-Katriina (1998).
- ³⁰ Stratigaki, Maria (1996) European Commission.
- ³¹ Tasavertaiset työmarkkinat –työryhmän muistio 2004:1, p 10.
- ³² Stratigaki, Maria (1996) European Commission.
- ³³ E.g. the project Multivarious Women of Lapland (Moninainen Lappilainen) (Heikkilä, Irmeli 2001). Founded in 1993, the Femina Borealis - WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH, an activity, education and research network in Northern Europe (<http://www.feminaborealis.net>), is a multisectoral and multidisciplinary network of women activists and those working and doing research in community planning and education. It supports and participates in research, development and training activities in the Barents region.
- ³⁴ Nakertaja Day Care Centre, Montessori Playschool, Huuhkajavaara Primary school and Day Care Centre, Pietari Brahe Primary School and Teppana Primary School. The partners' work plans deal with technology education in the context of early childhood education, pre-school education and elementary education, integrated through drama education and storycrafting methods into the examination and disintegration of gender roles. Technology education is complemented with sustainable development issues and English language immersion. The common development tasks are equal and gender sensitive technology education, methods of dismantling gender stereotypes as well as sustainable development. <http://www.womenit.info>
- ³⁵ Tietonaisia I studied young people's attitudes and images of the information industry and organised a media campaign directed at 10–14-year-old girls to update their images of the sector. Tietonaisia II was a more concrete effort to attract 12–14-year-old girls into technology and engineering studies and the information industry.
- ³⁶ Lead by the Department of Information Processing Science of the University of Oulu, the Learn project is part of the Mirror project coordinated by Technology Industries of Finland (www.mirror4u.net). <http://www.oulu.fi/learn>. The project has produced several Master's Theses related to youth images on the technology sector: Kukkonen, Sauli: "Nuorten asenteita tietotekniikkaa ja tietotekniikka-alaa kohtaan", Leiviskä, Katja: "Lukiolaistyttöjen näkemyksiä tietojenkäsittely tieteiden alasta" and Haataja, Anne: "Le@rn-projektiin osallistuvien lukiolaisten suhtautuminen tietoteollisuuteen ja sen ammatteihin".
- ³⁷ TiNA – Women in ICT, ICT studies and equality – turning women's difference into a resource. <http://tina.tkk.fi>
- ³⁸ Virtual Exchange – Training and Guidance for Female B-SET (Business, Science, Engineering & Technology) Students to Enhance European Placement Experience (UK-2000). The Project aims to provide a supportive virtual training and guidance environment for female students studying business, science, engineering or technology. It also aims to provide support to female students going on work placements abroad. The Virtual Exchange environment includes a skills centre with tutorials, careers resources and advice, business information and chat areas. The project is also producing products including a CD-ROM-based training package. <http://www.virtualxchange.org>
- ³⁹ <http://www.kajaaninyliopistokeskus.oulu.fi/proj/inpro/hiladies/default.htm> (Only in Finnish.)
- ⁴⁰ <http://www.womenit.info/materiaalintuotanto.htm> (A site with links to the Careers Booklet and Mentoring Models available in English.)
- ⁴¹ <http://www.mirror4u.net/english/materiaalit.html>
- ⁴² NCRB A Network for Crisis Centres for Women in the Barents Region. Report of the Nordic-Russian Development Project, 1999-2002. (2004) Eds Saarinen, Aino, Liapounova, Olga and Drachova, Irina. Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research. Gender research: methodology and practice, volume 5.
- ⁴³ Crossing Borders. Re-mapping Women's Movements at the turn of the 21st Century. (2004) Eds Romer Christensen, Hilda, Halsaa, Beatrice and Saarinen, Aino.
- ⁴⁴ "Violence against women is a global problem and a human rights violation. Violence or threat of violence affects the lives of women and girls everywhere, cutting across boundaries of wealth, ethnic background and culture. Women are beaten, raped, mutilated and killed with impunity. Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women campaign is designed to mobilise both men and women all over the world to counter violence and to use the power and persuasion of the human rights framework in the efforts to stop violence against women. Violence against women is never normal, legal or acceptable and should never be tolerated or justified. Change

- must come at international, national and local levels. It must be brought about by governments, institutions and individuals.”
<http://www.amnesty.fi/jokuraja/index.php> (Only in Finnish.)
- ⁴⁵ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995, and the Finnish Government is also committed to it. “D. Violence against Women. 112. Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.” <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>
- ⁴⁶ Gendered violence in schools and teacher training in the Barents region, coordinated by Vappu Sunnari. Other projects coordinated from Finland include NCBR - Research Network around Crisis Centres for Women in the Barents Region coordinated by Aino Saarinen, the Nordic Network on Violences, Agency Practices and Social Change coordinated by Suvi Ronkainen, and Masculinities and Violence in Youth Micro-cultures coordinated by Tommi Hoikkala.
- ⁴⁷ “The Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth UN Conference on Women organised 1995 obliged Governments to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. The Finnish Government made a commitment to the Platform of Action and adopted an equality programme titled “From Beijing to Finland” in February 1997. Under this programme, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health launched a national project for the prevention of violence against women and the prevention of prostitution at the beginning of 1998. The project was implemented by the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES) as two five year-projects, one on the prevention of violence against women and the other on the prevention of prostitution.” <http://www.vakivalta.net/> (Only in Finnish.)
- ⁴⁸ Elämä ilman pelkoa. Tools (in Finnish) for schools to address intimate partner violence (2002). The project on the prevention of violence against women by the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES) 1998–2002.
- ⁴⁹ Project titled Gendered Power Relations and Violence in Schools and Teacher Training: Violence against women has been the subject of particularly little study in Finnish institutions. This project studies the violence appearing in comprehensive schools by focusing on power relations and the representations of femininity, masculinity and sexuality. The project examined the relations between girls and boys, school violence, teacher students and their experiences and views of violence in teacher education and teaching practice. The aim is also to design gender sensitive teaching programmes with the objective of supporting the development of non-hierarchical interpersonal relations and prevent violence. In addition, the project produces teaching material for schools and teacher education. <http://www.aka.fi> (Only in Finnish.)
- ⁵⁰ Increasing Awareness in Educational Environments of Sexualised and Gendered Violence publication and online project and Aware II (Increasing Awareness in Teacher Education of Sexualised and Gendered Violence) are both funded by the EU programme Daphne. Daphne aims at preventing violence against children, young people and women. In Finland, the programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.
- ⁵¹ <http://glee.oulu.fi>
- ⁵² “Homophobia is a fear, hatred or revulsion towards homosexuals and is prejudice, discrimination, harassment or acts of violence against homosexuals.” <http://glee.oulu.fi>
- ⁵³ “Heterosexism is the stigmatisation, denial or denigration of non-heterosexual relationships. It is the assumption that either everybody is or should be heterosexual, and is the belief that heterosexual relationships are the only valid and legitimate type of relationship. It is manifested in the exclusion by omission or design of non-heterosexual persons in policies, procedures or activities of societal institutions. ” <http://glee.oulu.fi>
- ⁵⁴ Projects incorporating different dimension have also included multisectoral and extensive networking projects implemented under the Nordic BRYT project with education and labour authorities. The Kokkola Women’s Cooperative and the Devote project are examples of multisectoral activities integrating different sectors, dimensions and actors and that have also involved the creation of project clusters. The recent political-administrative measure of establishing regional women’s resource centres aims at supporting equality and women’s entrepreneurship.
- ⁵⁵ Tasavertaiset työmarkkinat -työryhmän muistio 2004:1.
- ⁵⁶ Heikkinen & Huuki 2005.
- ⁵⁷ Linnakylä, Kupari & Reinikainen 2002, 73-88.
- ⁵⁸ Act on Equality between Women and Men (8 August 1986/609).



WORKING LIFE EQUALITY PROJECTS

Objectives and methods

The number of equality projects that can be classified as those in the sphere of working life found in the survey that lasted a little under six months was almost two hundred. The survey phase utilised a diverse range of written and electronic documentation such as project reports, memorandums, articles (including in the press), project databases and other websites. In general, the methods of working life equality projects fall into the following three categories:

- **training** (e.g. seminars, courses, congresses, guidance, coaching, mentoring, study trips, traineeships, work placements, visits, excursions)
- **research** (e.g. inventories, surveys, research networks, project research, assessments, statistics, operational evaluations, reports)
- **development** (on the basis of the above or independently, e.g. designing, testing, implementing and evaluating various experiments, measures, follow-up and subprojects, methods, courses, programmes, tools, materials, etc).

The objectives of the equality projects were constructed around the following themes:

The structures of working life

Ways of doing equality work have included mapping the gendered workplace structures, studying how women's "special problems" have been taken into account in rural, employment and education policies and mainstreaming equality into regional and structural policies and the development of local environments.

Occupational safety and health

Equality work has also been seen as an occupational safety and health issue. In cooperation with those including occupational safety and health experts, methods have been developed to detect and address inequality and discrimination in the workplace.

Diversity

It is a challenging task to reconcile diversity and, on the other hand, efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, but this has – to a certain extent – been attempted in equality projects. Using the concept of diversity to market the utilitarian point of view of equality has proven efficient in achieving business involvement. On the other hand, diversity has been approached by producing information about the situation and status of sexual and gender minorities in working life as well as by looking for ways of facilitating their employment. Training has also been developed to promote diversity in the workplace and prevent discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, age or ethnicity. Another objective has been to discover in practice the similarities between the mechanisms that produce discrimination for various reasons (existence of stereotypes, marginalisation and exclusion).

Workplace practices

Projects aiming at changing practices have sought to make equality part of everyday life in the workplace. The role of gender has been seen as central. Channels of influence discovered include training equality consultants, HR managers, other management and personnel in equality issues. Efforts have been taken to make



the gender perspective a permanent part of all training and development activities. Formulating workplace equality plans has been one of the key objectives of equality work. Projects have examined the state of equality planning, assessed opportunities to influence through the plans, supported the furthering of the plans and incorporated the plans into practices, among others. These actions have sought to make equality work visible and create better workplace capacities to implement projects based on equality plans.

Work towards a change in women's education, training and career choices

A considerable proportion of the equality work under equality projects has focused on women. The general approach has been to steer women towards changing their own education, training and career choices and entering male-dominated sectors. Another goal has been to train women in management, leadership and entrepreneurship, and women's careers have been strengthened and supported through various forms of training and support. Yet another objective has been to arouse discussion about the problems related to women's career development and employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas.

Work of equal value

Work of equal value has been pursued through actions including job evaluations, developing fairer pay structures, studying and comparing the bases of women and men's pay, eradicating the part of the gender pay gap that has been regarded as a result of the different characteristics of women and men as well as their positioning in different occupations in different sectors, and evaluations on how the gender pay statistics could be sustainably developed.

Reconciling work and (heterosexual) family

Some relatively sizable projects aiming at the reconciliation of work and (heterosexual) family have been implemented in Finland. Their objectives have included expanding the perspective on the changes in the organisation of working life by combining the starting points of working life, families and equality, mapping the problem points and looking for new ways of reconciling work and family life.

Work towards a change in men's education, training and career choices

There have been very few projects aiming at a change among men. The ones implemented have looked for ways to attract men into female-dominated sectors, particularly social care and health.

Network of actors

Business life has been the actor most visibly absent from the cooperation network of equality projects. Those most commonly involved in project networks include the following:

- employed/unemployed adults, especially women
- trainers, educators, instructors and consultants
- researchers and research centres/institutes
- universities and other higher education institutions and their continuing education centres
- adult education centres
- workplaces (especially the public and third sector), personnel representatives and safety representatives, HR developers, personnel and management
- interest groups
- government ministries
- employment offices

- Employment and Economic Development Centres
- cities, towns and municipalities
- centres that support entrepreneurship
- foundations and NGOs
- women's networks
- financiers.

A historical perspective on working life equality projects

In Finland, equality has been a social and political term that has been actualised in the demands for social change.¹ This can also be seen when examining equality projects in working life.² Here we look at the projects by each decade, which is somewhat problematic as equality work does not “develop” or advance temporally but is rather situation-specific. The objectives, perspectives and methods of equality work overlap, and for instance projects implemented in the 1970s and 2000s may well address similar problems related to equality. The development in equality and gender perceptions has not been linear, either, but some related movement has been seen. There have been education, training, research and development activities related to gender desegregation during each of the decades studied.

The 1970s

The bulk of the projects promoting equality in working life are from the 1990s and 2000s, but such projects have been implemented since the 1970s, with the earliest ones surveying and reporting on issues including gender discrimination and unequal treatment, women's career development problems and the promotion of equal pay. In the 1970s, the equality perception was about the equal rights of women and men in work and family life, and the gender perception emphasised the similarities between women and men where, however, men and the male model of living implicitly became the standard. Since the 1970s, various assessments, surveys, inventories and studies on equality problems in working life were carried out by the Council for Equality. The first projects were related to solving the problems, including the 1973 Discrimination Project of the Council's Labour Market Division that focused on preventing gender discrimination.³

The 1980s

In the 1980s, the gender perception shifted the perspective a little towards women's specialness and the significance of women's own space. The equality perception was about making women's experiences visible and regarding them as valuable as men's experiences. The gender perception brought up the idea of the essential difference of the genders. Women organised activities including awareness groups, which the research data characterised as significant and empowering to women. It appears that the 1980s was a particularly active period – not so much for working life projects but for equality projects related to education and training, many of which aimed at gender desegregation in working life. The 1980s saw many major equality projects in education, including the Nordic BRYT AVAA project implemented in 1985–1989 and aimed at eradicating the gender division of labour. Implemented in the sphere of working life, a two-year project on the problematics of addressing the gender division of labour at a Finnish paper mill still remains topical in the field of desegregation. In addition, the 1980s saw a few research projects such as Quality of Work and Social Relations in 1982–1986 surveying the gender systems, gendered structures and practices of male and female-dominated as well as balanced workplaces. The first projects attracting girls and women into technology were also launched.



The eternal project towards equal pay

The objective of equal pay is probably the one among the equality objectives that has been longest on the agenda while materialising the slowest. Therefore the most critical aspects of equality seem to culminate in it. The history of campaigning for equal pay can be traced back to, for instance, the principles of the Treaty of Rome (1957), which established the European Economic Community, with one of the key ones being equal pay for equal work for men and women. The Equal Pay Directive entered into force in 1975, in 1963 Finland ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and in 1966 Yhdistys 9 (Association 9) launched its campaign towards equal pay. In 1975, the Council for Equality appealed to the labour market organisations to eradicate inequality in women's pay and especially to improve the status of low-income women, and in the same year the Council also published a report on the status of women in working life and pointed out that women's pay was 30% lower than men's.

During the past twenty-odd years, women's pay level has varied between 76.7% and 79.5% of men's⁴, but in order to close the 20–30% pay gap, extensive measures with influence on the structural level of working life, together with measures addressing workplace practices, will be required. The Act on Equality between Women and Men calls for the same pay for the same work or work of equal value for all those employed by the same employer. The Employment Contracts Act also prohibits discrimination in working life and calls for equal treatment of employees. The Equality Act does, however, allow different pay systems for different employee groups, also within the same employer. Nevertheless, the same employer observing different collective agreements is not an acceptable reason for gender pay discrimination.⁵

To promote equal pay, the period of 1989–1994 saw a major Nordic project on Equal Pay, with the Equal Pay Division appointed by the Council for Equality acting as the monitoring group.⁶ Around the same time, the birth of job evaluation projects was boosted by the Job Evaluation Group founded by the labour market organisations in 1989. The Group's task was to assess the systems of job analysis used and make proposals on how to develop them.⁶ The Group's work continued until the 2000s, and in 2003 the Group launched a project titled Towards Equal Pay through New Pay Systems – Job and Employee Analysis in Finland and aiming at assessing the impacts of the new pay systems towards equal pay and how they function in the context of promoting equal pay.⁷ In 1990–1994, the City of Espoo also organised a job evaluation project that developed new types of methods for job evaluation.

The 1990s

In the 1990s, EU Structural Funds, Community Initiatives and programmes increased the number of projects, influenced the forms of implementation and shifted the focus to the employment perspective. At the same time, the project cooperation networks expanded. Since the mid 1990s, in practice the majority of working life projects were "women's projects", and their number has remained high until the 2000s when immigrant women have also become a target group of these projects.

In the 1990s, the gender perceptions of equality projects included the concept of social gender, which reveals an awareness of the environment – for instance education – having a role in producing gender. Women's projects focused especially on work towards a change in women's education, training and career choices and attracting women into male-dominated fields. In addition to attracting women into male-dominated fields, the objectives of women's projects included promoting women's leadership and management, entrepreneurship and careers in order to remove obstacles to their career development. These aspirations are realistic as men are culturally more valuable even to the extent that men can receive better pay than women for the same work, which is a well-known obstacle to desegregation.⁸

Either consciously or unconsciously, the objectives of women's projects ended up equating equality promotion with work towards a change in girls' and women's education, training and career choices. An observation that supports the notion of a hierarchically constructed gender order is that projects aiming in a similar way at guiding and training men were almost nonexistent during the period studied, excluding the odd project attracting men into fields such as social care and health. Despite the fact that many female-dominated sectors will be suffering from a shortage of labour in the near future, there have not been any major national campaigns to attract boys and men into female-dominated sectors. In the context of equality projects, men have not been included as objects of measures towards a change.

The work towards a change in women's education, training and career choices goes back to the 1980s when projects began to attract girls and women particularly into technology. It has been interesting to find how it has been equality work in the field of technology that has received financial resources, and the closer we get to today, the greater the focus on technology in equality projects (see also 'Equality Projects in Education and Training').

Women's projects have also resulted in local activities around Finland, support services to facilitate employment, various cooperation and women's networks, resource centres aimed at women, local initiatives and regional development activities as well as businesses and cooperatives. Women have in many ways supported other women in networking, training and employment as well as societal and regional influencing. At the same time, women have, through their activities, helped address considerably larger societal and regional problems, and equality has been incorporated into issues including political decision-making at various levels. The activities of women's groups have been particularly successful and significant for the women themselves, and the method has been praised by group leaders and members alike.

Equality projects aiming at changing the practices of working life emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. The Equality Act is likely to have influenced this. There was, however, a somewhat quieter period in the implementation of working life equality projects during the years of recession in the early 1990s. The goal was to make equality part of everyday life in the workplace, and the significance of gender was regarded as crucial. The early 1990s research project titled the Gendered/Gendering Practices of Working Life created a common theoretical basis for understanding the gendering practices of working life and brought out the gendered nature of the power relations in working life. An equality project creating continuity for equality work up to the present day was the training of equality consultants that took place in Jyväskylä in the 1990s and that was described in our research data as something that was significant and advanced equality work. The project also created continuation projects. In the late 1990s, the reconciliation of work and (heterosexual) family, equality plans and job evaluations stood out among the project objectives. In equality work directed at practices, issues including HR management and the development of work organisations came up as channels of influencing in the workplace. Efforts were taken to make the gender perspective a permanent part of all training and development activities – the mainstreaming of equality began.

The 2000s

The 2000s appears to be an era of programmes, and funding seems to favour equality projects that are large in scale, in some way deal with or utilise technology, consist of several subprojects and have a wide cooperation network. On the other hand, those still most obviously absent from the cooperation networks are representatives of business life. An interesting observation found during our examination of the



projects is the constant transformation of equality and gender perceptions, which has resulted in a variety of methods. With strengthening market-orientation in the 1990s, equality was talked about in the projects not so much with the promotion of women's or human rights in mind as had been the case in the 1970s and 1980s but rather from the perspective of financial profit, as something that would bring success, efficiency and productivity, among others, for businesses. In the early 2000s, the concept of equality seems to be transforming again, and the concept of diversity, which has arrived in Finland from the US, has had an impact on this. In project objectives, the objective of equality has turned into diversity or the promotion of diversity and difference. As such, this change may enable a deeper deliberation of gender, but it may also lead into gender being pushed aside from the problematics of other mechanisms that create difference. Equality work has also involved discussion about the meanings of gender, awareness of the power relations in society and working life and an understanding of people never being totally free to make independent choices, about making discriminating practices visible and deconstructing the heteronormative gender order. On the other hand, equality work that focuses on issues including attitudes and gender roles still takes place.

Notes

- ¹ Holli, A-M. 2003.
- ² The projects mentioned in the text have been brought up because they in one way or the other reflect the special features, objectives and methods of equality projects typical of the period.
- ³ Räsänen, L. 1997.
- ⁴ Lehto, A-M. 1999.
- ⁵ Työmarkkinakeskusjärjestöjen työnarviointijärjestelmien seurantaryhmä (TASE) 2003.
- ⁶ Heiskanen, T. 1996.
- ⁷ Työmarkkinakeskusjärjestöjen työnarviointijärjestelmien seurantaryhmä (TASE) 2003.
- ⁸ Hynninen, P. 2004.



GENDER

■ *"What tends to happen is that you forget gender because the way it is in these target organisations involved in this is that people aren't into gender that much. But then at the first seminars even the employers were saying that oh, I see, this isn't actually just about things between the genders, that this is actually good stuff. That hey, this is about age and ethnicity, too. Yeah. So gender tends to get lost in all that." Tarja (F)*

What we think gender means affects what we set as project objectives and the way we pursue the objectives. Of course, it also affects the project results. Indeed, a crucial obstacle to the advancement of equality seems to be that the division into two results in assumptions about the fundamental dissimilarity of women and men – or vice versa. In the most extreme cases, women and men are seen as complementing each other in a manner whereby the two together form "a complete human being". This way of thinking includes the assumption of the heterosexuality of the two parties. What makes this problematic in terms of equality is that characteristics that are labelled as masculine are seen as more valuable than feminine ones.

Projects often aim at the more valuable, male-centred environment towards which girls and women are "encouraged". Talk about encouragement includes the image of girls and women as timid. Their "traditional" choices are not regarded as brave or rational. This also tends to strengthen the difference in value between the environments of the two genders. If and when desegregation fails to take place, the reason for this ends up being bounced back to girls and women themselves and "naturalised" as a gender characteristic.¹

The assumption of differing characteristics necessarily leads into different treatment, which then produces difference that strengthens the assumption of gender-bound characteristics. We are going around in circles.

It is possible to try and break the circle. We can look at gender as a social or cultural construction. This enables an aspiration to change treatment and conditions, and this has also taken place in many projects. Many assumptions about gender differences have been disassembled in practice. In addition, various kinds of girls and boys, women and men have appeared, who are even different in different situations and conditions. The division into two has become questionable. In the end, there may even be space for those who cannot be unambiguously categorised into either gender.²

Segregation produced throughout life


Becoming a full member of society requires the acknowledgement and recognition of a gender dichotomy. When a child is born, it is classified as either a girl or a boy on the basis of certain anatomical features.³ Different characteristics, abilities and traits, which are regarded as stable, are associated in images with the two gender categories produced in this way. Having been defined as belonging to one of the two categories, we learn at a very early age to act like 'girls' and 'boys' and later on like 'women' and 'men'. The division gains a political dimension: certain gender-related ways of being and acting receive greater social recognition and appreciation than others. In our culture, as in most other known cultures, the division into two is organised hierarchically whereby 'man/male' is more valuable than 'woman/female'.



Heteronormative gender

The dichotomised gender perception contains the idea of heterosexual femininity and heterosexual masculinity. It is as if heterosexuality was natural, and therefore it becomes a norm against which all other sexualities are classified as deviant.⁴ The dominance of heterosexuality is maintained by producing the image of two different types of body that are inherently biologically, hormonally and genetically gendered as 'female' and 'male' bodies. Heteronormativity organises and guides education, training and working life. Heteronormativity creates a code of behaviour that expects women to behave in a 'feminine' and men in a 'masculine' manner. In our practices, we produce and implement these images, often without even realising it. Heteronormativity can also guide the human resource policy of a workplace. Issues including the reconciliation of work and family life are based on the assumption of a heterosexual family where the woman bears the primary responsibility for the children and the household. On the other hand, unmarried men may be asked to state the reasons for their marital status in contexts including job interviews.

Gender as a power relation

 *"Well of course we also talk about it because there's also the aim that we (the technology sector) would like to get more women into our sector; so we'll talk about it, that we have like work that girls might be interested in. There's also err stereotypes in the field, err people think (...) that the tasks won't be suitable. A bit like when I was told when (...) that this isn't a job for birds so why don't you just go home. This kind of thinking."* Anja (F)

Gender as a dichotomous hierarchical relation is a power relation. Social, cultural and normative power relations create an image of what kind of being, interaction, body and desire is appropriate at any given time, and these power relations can be seen all around us. At the same time, power relations produce ways of being and doing suitable for each gender as well as different premises and opportunities for action. This way experiences also become gendered, and they gender things. Failure to comply with these culturally produced ways of thinking and operating can result in various punishments.⁵ This is how gendered education and working life are also formed and reproduced.

Gender cuts across individuals, groups, businesses, NGOs, organisations as well as forms and arrangements of work found in the spheres of education, training and working life.⁶ Indeed, a good example of the organising power of gender is the segregation in working life that extends to every sector and level as well as to the contents of tasks, and that cannot be desegregated in any other way than by tackling gender.

On technology and gender

It is useful to examine gender specifically in the context of technology. This is where our cultural ideas about the meanings of gender are particularly emphasised.

Our everyday lives, situations and practices, our ways of thinking and functioning, communality as much as production are all interspersed with technology.⁷ Technology is also involved in the way we experience time and space as the factor organising them. Technology and the related power relations also shape our bodies. We do not necessarily need to see the human body as something only skin deep: we can extend it further with the help of eye glasses, answering machines, the Internet, mobile phones, prostheses, implants and phone sex to name but a few.

In one way or another, technology has always been a part of life. Nevertheless, there has been a desire to create mythologies behind the origin of the technologies regarded as the most significant ones by, for example, defining technological development as something that has taken place due to individual people.⁹ In

Finland, the triumphs of technology have been described as heroic tales where the heroes are white, middle-class and heterosexual males.¹⁰

It is good to consider what we perceive as technology at any given time as something that is developing and transforming. Technology is defined in social power relations, and it is socially produced and defined. It also pays to deliberate about what is culturally and socially produced into technology and what is not, and what kinds of hierarchically constructed differences get created like this. Why is it that devices such as mobile phones and DVD players slot in as technology in our minds whereas the connection is not as obvious with sowing or washing machines?

Technology is defined by people, and in Finland those who have come to define technology have mainly been men. Also the knowledge related to the creation and utilisation of technology is produced socially: technology is never neutral, not even when it takes the form of a physical device such as the computer. Combined with the knowledge of what technology is used for, the computer simultaneously creates mechanisms of privileges and exclusion. The ones most smoothly adapted as technology users are those with knowledge of technology. However, even more strongly than by knowledge, the technology users and the conditions technology is used in are defined by power and gender.¹¹

Even in Finland, people have started to look more critically at technology, raising questions including on whose terms, under which values and in which interests technology is defined and developed.¹² In these circumstances, the segregated environments of the genders produce different experiences, knowledge and skills – from which the feminised environment is mostly excluded when it comes to technology. When the process of identifying and deconstructing the mechanisms that exclude girls and women begins, technology can be defined as something more polymorphic. The entry of women's expertise into technology brings new perspectives while shaping technology in a new way. However, women should not be made the bearers of responsibility for technological development.¹³

Good practice

Looking at technology as something that is socially constructed and defined. This creates space for new perspectives and different actors, which can lead into reconstructing and redefining technology.

Example

In 1983, Technology for Life (TEP-TILT) was established in Helsinki. The NGO aims at steering technological development into a direction where it promotes the achievement and preservation of peace all over the world, improves the living conditions of humankind and the use of natural resources with responsibility for preventing their exhaustion and ensuring their fair distribution. It aims at increasing ethical awareness among technology experts about global problems that concern the entire humankind.

Choosing an occupation

Promoting gender equality is one of the tasks of education, while the gender segregation of the labour market is an indicator of gender disparity. Since education prepares people for the labour market, it is natural to expect change to take place in connection with the choices of subjects, education, training and occupation that are made within the sphere of education. Educational guidance and counselling at comprehensive schools has, in particular, been assigned the task of affecting change.¹⁴



Research into guidance and counselling practices has shown that, instead of deconstructing, they actually reproduce gender divisions.¹⁵ For example, views on gender differences in interests, inclinations and talents may be underlying factors that influence guidance towards subject choices.

The counsellors are, however, in a difficult situation: they should be able to deconstruct what the school is constructing. According to studies, school replicates and enforces the gender division that people already carry when they enter school.¹⁶ Gender neutral talk about pupils and students disguises the gender perceptions of those who work in education, but these perceptions have a role in directing educational decision-making, planning, administration and implementation. These perceptions must be made visible and revised if necessary.

When preparing for the labour market, education tends to hide the gendered and gendering terms of the choices. At the very least, the choices made by girls and women are subconsciously influenced by images and knowledge about their opportunities to reconcile work and non-working life. "Traditional" choices may be rational in a social situation where women bear the responsibility for care.

Nevertheless, people – especially girls and women – still take up the other gender's occupations. Inequalising gender perceptions and the resulting practices in education, the labour market, working and non-working life, however, cause the phenomenon where some of those entering training or employment in the other gender's sector end up changing to their "own" gender's sector. They may have been subjected to disparagement, bullying or sexual harassment. Tasks may have been segregated by gender. A woman may have received less pay than a man for work that has actually been the same. Consequently, one of the critical points in equality promotion is whether educational institutions and employers are prepared to welcome the representatives of the "other" gender and treat them equally.

Good practice

When aiming to influence subject and other educational and training choices, it is useful to see the traditional choices as rational. One should not promise too much. Cooperation with the recipients (educational institutions, employers) is important.

Gendered expertise

"At work, a woman is easily too young or too old; you're always too much of something or too little of the other." Pirjo (F)

We associate men and women with different characteristics, traits and abilities. In technology, people talk about gendered expertise, which means that technological expertise is perceived as a male-centred and masculine realm.¹⁷

The situation being like this, a woman entering the field of technology may have to adapt to the dominant male culture, become "one of the lads" or a prettifier of the workplace. It is not self-evident that the knowledge and experience produced by the feminine environment is appreciated or heard at work.

When striving towards equality promotion, it is important to note that even though women working in the field of technology may share similar experiences, the women are different from each other; womanhood is not a universal category – not even within technology. Women with different starting points and interests work in the field, and they do not wish to be defined in relation to men or through men. It is good to stop and think who the women discussed are, which women's interests are being advocated and whether projects on women might exclude some "groups of

women". What does the concept of woman/femininity actually mean, and what kind of femininity might it produce?

Juxtapositions also get produced in technology through the creation of dichotomies between experts and users. Juxtapositions are often gendered, whereby mostly youngish men are seen as experts and developers, and "others" are seen as users, so user expertise is not recognised or acknowledged. It is good to be aware of the perspective from which technology is being examined in each case. If we have a mental image of technology users also being actors, we are also offering women more space as actors such as generators of change.

Good practice

Consciously deconstructing various juxtapositions such as the hierarchically organised gender categories of technology and the construction of dichotomies between technology experts and users.

Good practice

In technology, the active involvement of women must be enabled without ending up defining women's work, competence and being in relation to men.

Example

A woman working in the field of technology may be described as, for instance, one of the lads. What kind of agency does this type of characterisation produce and exclude?

Equality work of equality projects focused on technology

"You do what you get funding for"

"Of course funding directs what you do; that's obvious in research and training; it really matters what gets funding: you do what you get funding for." Jaana (F)

Promoting gender equality and eradicating inequality has been a characteristically women-based political activity. Its immediate objectives and measures are formed in relation to the social realities of the time. However, the relationship between equality and today's market-oriented capitalism is difficult. In the 1970s, equality policies focused on strengthening the position of women, but in the early years of 21st century they are more closely connected with the interests of the labour market, the demand and supply of labour as well as the power relations of working life. This is where women over and over again position themselves and are positioned as a potential and movable labour force.

In equality work, it is worthwhile to take into account both national and global power relations. They are intertwined with each other through social movements, and there are also regional differences in their impacts on the genders.¹⁸ Emphasising the individual and also present in equality work, the neo-liberalist ideology focuses on individualisation, the choices of the individual and well as freedom and compulsion with regard to choices. An ideology that emphasises individualism does not merely maintain the hierarchical gender order: it also exacerbates differences, erodes commonalities and impoverishes – particularly women.¹⁹ The type set as the ideal of globalisation is the middle-class western woman, who is individualistic, flexible and used to being gazed upon, who blames herself for any failures and re-educates



herself over and over again.²⁰ On the other hand, another type who can also be seen as the ideal of globalisation is the woman who agrees to work in conditions that resemble slavery.

Good practice

When planning equality work, being aware of how the impacts of social power relations – which also embrace technology – differ by gender.

Example

Consider how the images of the non-productive and static public sector (such as the social and health care sector) and the productive and dynamic private sector (such as the IT sector) reflect a gender order that is hierarchical and constructed on juxtapositions.

Equality work focusing on women only is not enough

"...but then we can ask if women want to be metalworkers. To think if we should force people into jobs like they used to do in the Soviet Union. Jobs that you don't sort of want to do (...). But the thing is that you can't define society's appreciation that way by saying that now we must appreciate nurses' work the same way we appreciate machinists' work. It just doesn't go like that." Tuija (F)

A historical examination of equality projects implemented in Finland shows certain similarities in the development objectives since the 1980s: efforts to influence the education, training and career choices of mainly girls and women. Through various development measures, education, training, guidance and information, these choices have been steered towards technology fields in particular.²¹ The object of desegregation has actually been the gender segregation of labour, the bodily construction of which had earlier been conscious and planned.²² However, the desegregation has only taken place in one direction: only for women. Development work has also focused on changing the attitudes of teachers in schools, vocational institutions, higher education and liberal adult education; developing teaching, training, guidance and counselling methods as well as increasing teachers' technological competencies. The projects have created various development tools including proposals for operating models, guides on the development of teaching and training methods as well as guidelines on how to arouse interest in technology among girls and women. The projects have also offered labour market training where women have increased their competencies by studying technology and working in technology businesses, including in traineeships.

"Just shaping attitudes, if you sort of ... (...) shaping won't make any difference if the reality won't change at all alongside with it. (...) I really have to wonder that – when we think that I graduated from upper secondary school in 1975, that's thirty years ago, and they were already encouraging girls (...) to study maths and science, and the world still hasn't changed much. Actually it seems to me that we've even taken a few steps backwards when it comes to attitudes in this." Anja (F)

Correspondingly, the number of equality projects focusing on the education, training and career choices of boys and men has been small, almost non-existent, during the period studied. Men have not been set as the objects of the work towards a change despite the fact that the gender segregation of labour also restricts men's employment.²³

In broad outline, the results of the projects have been similar, and they have brought up issues including the fact that girls and women learn technology just

the same as boys and men. The experiences of success that girls and women have gained in equality projects are important and may well attract the odd girl or woman into technology, but to achieve permanent results, other types of equality work are also needed. The responsibility and obligation to realise equality cannot be placed solely on the individual women entering the technology sector. The reason behind and solution to the problem does not lie with individual women, so we also cannot assume that the gradual increase in the number of women in technology would automatically create change. From the viewpoint of the realisation of equality, it is problematic that technology in itself manifests as a neutral operating area and remains untouched.

Equality work is directed at technology itself, the processes that form its contents and culture as well as the practices of technology businesses. Although direct discrimination of women in issues including recruitment has decreased, women still face problems, especially in the working life, and therefore change to jobs typical to their own gender.²⁴ Women's higher level of education does not secure their position in working life, either.²⁵

Good practice

Being aware of the fact that the small number of women in technology is not specifically caused by their reluctance to study and work in the field. First and foremost, equality work is needed in technology itself. Drawing up workplace equality plans is one good way of incorporating equality work into company practices.

Example

Girls and women have been encouraged and supported to enter the male-dominated fields of technology. Consider what kinds of meanings such encouragement and support may gain. Can this policy end up strengthening the hierarchical gender order and gender segregation?

Example

A project steered women towards the fields of technology, and one of the activities was women's work placements in technology businesses. Having completed her placement, one woman was disappointed and told that she had mainly been assigned the tasks of making coffee and photocopies in the company. She had also been sexually harassed by the managing director. She said she would not work in a field that allows all this and decided to drop out from her studies in technology. Some of the other women in the group had also had similar experiences.


When a project aims at attracting women into technology, attention needs to be paid to how the situation is interpreted from the viewpoint of objectives and equality. Instead of ending up blaming individual women or regarding the project activities as a failure, the situation must be examined from a wider perspective, also taking research results related to the topic into consideration. In the project in question, the experiences taught that it is a good idea to start cooperation with the business at an early stage to ensure that company practices also become more equal.


Among women?

"It really is women who need to be given resources. Although men also need equality work, and men also need exactly the same measures (...) in my opinion you can have an impact on the entire society if you make things better for women and when women believe in themselves and have the strength to take the initiative and be creative and enjoy life (...)." Titta (F)

In equality projects, working in women's groups has been a popular method that has also been used to address the gender segregation in technology. Commonly regarded as neutral, technology has been approached critically in women's groups, and its male-centred nature has been exposed. The groups have deconstructed it by seeking new meanings into the sector that women used to regard as a male domain. In these groups, women also do not have to feel like 'the Others', which can be the case in groups consisting of both women and men.²⁶ Instructors working with women's groups should have knowledge of equality and the meanings of gender. Familiarity with research on gender in technology also facilitates their work.²⁷

The objectives of women's groups include strengthening women's agency – women's empowerment – which is related to women's financial independence. When introduced in Finland, compulsory education offered a channel to at least dream about expanding one's domains.²⁸ Industrialisation meant paid employment for women, too.

 *Kristiina: Women becoming bolder, what does it (...) actually mean? How can we see it?*

 *Katri (F): Well, it may be that say a woman who everyone's always been used to loading up with new piles of stuff to do – 'cause you're so good at this, why don't you do this 'cause you've got the knack of it – well, she might say that no I won't, not any more. I've got too much work, I haven't got the time.*

Women's empowerment has been described, among other things, as a process where women individually and collectively become aware of how power relations operate in their lives and then challenge the injustice caused by them.²⁹ Empowerment is associated with increased awareness, expanded opportunities to make choices, participation in decision-making and access to resources, including financial and economic decision-making. Empowerment can lead into concrete actions: changes in issues including legislation and access to resources as well as public and private institutions that are connected with the creation and maintenance of women's subordinate position.³⁰ In practice, what makes empowerment challenging is its implementation in equality projects and the types of femininities that are created in the process. The way of thinking whereby the interests of all women are equal everywhere may slow down or even prevent the achievement of the political objectives. Another restraining factor is organising women's groups on the basis of the interests of working life.³¹

Women's groups critically examine femininity and the cultural meanings it can acquire. Empowerment also involves power issues: who gets to decide on the process, who will participate in the process and how will they do it. It is tempting to make decisions and choices on behalf of others. Consequently, equality projects talk about objects of the work towards change and carefully pre-set objectives and outcomes. There should, however, be enough courage to leave empowerment an open process.³² This is challenging in a society that underlines efficiency, performance and productivity.

Good practice

In technology studies, trying out work in women's groups. In connection with studying technology, women's groups familiarise themselves with technology from a historical and social perspective as well as with women's status in technology.

Example

"The group is such an enormous resource (...) it helps you and supports you so much." Pirjo (F)

Example

Kristiina: How about the fact that all of the participants were women, did that have any impact?

Julia (F): Yes, it did. Somehow the way it had an impact was that it was sort of freer.

Conclusion

In order to deconstruct gender

"...if we think about (...) an order, then it's a lot easier to talk about equality between men and women than it is to talk about say the status of the Roma people in Finland and their treatment and whether the Roma are equal. So I think that over here, over here the easiest like the most legitimate issue these days is age. Age management and age equality – oh yes. Next there's, well, perhaps women and men, then perhaps ethnic equality, meaning in terms of foreigners. But with ethnic equality, people don't like to think so readily that it's about our own minorities, the Roma and Sámi people. That, like, it's easier in that, too, to talk about, you can say that it's like a newer and sort of more visible thing that at least in southern Finland we now have immigrants and. And then that, like (...) I don't know, this is only hypothetical, I don't quite, now that we didn't have disability, but I'd imagine that the next one could be disability and then sexual orientation or gender orientation." Sirkka (F)

Cultural gender categories are in motion, which is easy to perceive by observing the different ways of being and doing in femininity and masculinity and, through this, observing the diversity around us. There "really" are very many different kinds of "real" women and men.

"Within these groups, these different questions may manifest differently. Meaning that what gender equality is among the Roma people or Somalis or in the gay and lesbian communities, how it works in these and, gender equality, whether it exists and is talked about." Jari (M)

We are so tied to the dichotomy, both linguistically and in practice, that the idea of gender as a cultural construction is difficult to realise in practice. The idea of heterosexuality as just one form or practice of sexuality may initially feel strange. It may feel even stranger to think about women and men without comparing them with each other.

"Because openness is probably the first thing, that you dare to be open and you dare to ask and say that now you don't know something." Sirkka (F)

It is a good idea for those engaged in equality work to discuss the different gender perceptions and the meanings assigned to gender. It is useful to negotiate what kinds of gender perceptions the objectives and methods of equality work contain. For example, if a heterosexual family is the presumption in the reconciliation of work and family or whether other types of being and doing also fit into the gender

perception. Might equality planning emphasise or exclude the interests of certain people or groups? When talking about women and men, we can stop and think what kinds of femininities and masculinities we create through our words. Another issue is also how each one of us takes it when others around us do not live and think the same way as we do.

Gender sensitive and equal action calls for time and resources; changes do not take place automatically or necessarily even easily. However, probably the hardest part is to identify practices that produce gender and are discriminatory in our own activities.

Good practice

Making gender visible by discussing it and taking gender and the differences folding in gender into consideration in equality work. Negotiating gender also involves deconstructing heteronormativity, which brings new perspectives into equality work and the meanings assigned to gender. The examination of the diversity of genders and sexualities questions what is real and how things should stand. Such examination challenges us to question our society's normative power relations that produce the image of what kind of being, interaction, body and desire is acceptable and desirable.

Example

Although the XY and XX chromosomes may be different from each other, why is it that we think that what they produce is specifically two opposite genders?

Example

"Experiencing the diversity. That there are different people (...) that people like this who are different and in that way like as a whole diverse err are together and are doing something together." Sirkka (F)

Example

An interviewed equality worker described how discussion specifically about sexual minorities has influenced gender perceptions. In equality work, it is easy to succumb to thinking, for instance, that there is some kind of universal femininity or universal Nordic femininity. The equality worker found it important to consider women's mutual differences and issues, including the fact that not all women share the same view about the reconciliation of work and family, having children or getting married.

Example

"The sudden understanding that is sometimes created in a group – that really I've never realised how much things like working hours arrangements can influence something or that ... if you give an example like that when are you going to ask that 30-year old young man if he's got young kids and how much time he spends looking after them (...) people find it so obvious that his wife's looking after them (...) these are little things that make people start to think that 'I see you can look at it that way, too' (...) just little things (...)." Jaana (F)

Notes

- ¹ For example, differences in girls' and boys' performance in school are looked for in biology and (disputable) brain differences instead of examining issues such as the indicators used or social structures as possible explanations to the differences.
- ² Intersex people, see 3 below.
- ³ If there is ambiguity in these, classification is sought through further examinations,

- and the body may be surgically altered to comply with the classification made. Intersex people that have been subjected to forced classification have recently stood up to question the procedure.
- 4 Heteronormativity organises and directs education, working life and non-working life. See Lehtonen 2002, 16.
 - 5 Lehtonen 2002.
 - 6 E.g. Kinnunen & Korvajärvi 1996.
 - 7 Eriksson & Vehviläinen (eds) 1999, 8.
 - 8 Braidotti 2002.
 - 9 Green 2001.
 - 10 Vehviläinen 2002.
 - 11 Green 2001. Viewpoints presented include the one whereby the boundaries between technology and the body are vague and in motion. Technology cultures can also set themselves up as challengers of the juxtaposing and dichotomised Western thinking (mind-body, reason-emotion, humans-nature, humans-animals, rational-irrational, machine-body, male-female, etc). At the same time, while technology is incorporated deeper and deeper into people's lives, it becomes ever more unclear who is the maker, creator and producer and who the one made, created or produced. (Haraway 1991). On the gender of technology, see also MacKenzie & Wajckman 1999, Hearn & Heiskanen 2003, Eriksson & Vehviläinen 1999, Vehviläinen 2001, Kailo 2002.
 - 12 Seminar on equality in information technology at the Finnish Parliament on 14 October 2004.
 - 13 Emphases on saving the environment (environmental technology) and care (welfare technology) have been used to attract women into training in these fields. This involves an ethical problem that can also maintain segregation. Will women end up bearing the responsibility now that war technology enables the multiple destruction of the world? Commitments to ecosocially sustainable development should guide all technology. This cannot be the content responsibility brought to technology by a "feminine" input.
 - 14 National core curriculum for basic education 1985, 1994 and 2004.
 - 15 Juutilainen 2003.
 - 16 There is evidence that girls' perceptions of their own abilities and opportunities follow the perceptions whereby the genders are fundamentally different. It seems that these perceptions can be influenced by providing information, see Manninen & Juntunen. There is also evidence of young women being aware of the pressure conflicts of life as a woman which, on the other hand, they think they can influence through their own choices. See Gordon & Lahelma 2004. On the construction of gender in school practices, see also Lahelma & Gordon 1999, Tolonen 2001, Lahelma 2002, Palmu 2003.
 - 17 Even with equality projects in the field of technology, the significance of gender is not necessarily taken into consideration, which might lead into interaction being even quite strongly organised by gender. People may be very aware of the existence of segregation and, for instance in IT, the cultural labelling of expertise as a male domain. When it comes to oneself, people want to see actions in accordance with the common gender order rather as a personal choice and tend to deny the existence of gender orders. (See Vehviläinen 1997, 2003).
 - 18 See the Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization 2004; Kailo, Sunnari & Vuori 2004.
 - 19 Gordon 2002, 51.
 - 20 Sunnari 2003.
 - 21 Smeds et al. 2002.
 - 22 See Tuomaala 2004.
 - 23 Kolehmainen 1999.
 - 24 Kolehmainen 1999.
 - 25 E.g. Naumanen 2002.
 - 26 Vehviläinen 1997.
 - 27 Feminist technology research has searched for alternative ways of looking at and defining technology and challenging the juxtapositions that are constructed within it. See e.g. Wajckman 1991, Braidotti & Lykke 1996, Cockburn 1991, Haraway 1991.
 - 28 Tuomaala 2004.
 - 29 Hannan 2003.
 - 30 Hannan 2003.
 - 31 Today's working life makes promises of emancipation to recruits who make a commitment to the company (compare with project objectives), assume responsibility for their own competence, self-evaluation and continuous learning, are ready for continuous transformation and being subjected to appraisals. At the same time, meeting the requirements has meant and means a simultaneous experience of self-control and subordination, pleasure and pain.
 - 32 Davies 1996.

ORGANISATIONS REPRODUCING GENDER



Introduction

Our interpretations when analysing the research data challenge us to realise the significance of the form of organisation to an equality project's activities, agencies, embodied actors, objectives and efficiency in reaching the objectives. This chapter presents proposals for equality promotion with regard to these.

Equality work takes place within organisations, and an equality project is itself an organisation. Therefore our object of examination is the project organisation – the shaping, practices and structures of which affect the success of equality work. An organisation is a social formation that is connected with the way in which society is officially organised. Organisations are products of modern societies created in order to take care of tasks that require specialisation. Organisations can be described using concepts including those of bureaucracy¹ and hierarchy. We have grown up and acted in hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations such as schools and workplaces. There has been a growing interest in non-hierarchical² organisations as these are efficient in aspects including interaction, creating experiences of dignity, communication and pleasantness of work.

Gendered organisations

In a theory of gendered organisations, Joan Acker³ suggests that organisational structures, processes and resources both reproduce and maintain gender. Organisational structures consist of the documents that define and direct its activities. Organisational processes are made up of people's talk and their manners of thinking and acting, which can be separated into four different dimensions:

- a) divisions created in tasks, pay, hierarchies, through power and subordination
- b) interaction regulating interpersonal relations
- c) symbols, images and awareness created regarding the organisation
- d) a process of self-definition where a person perceives the behavioural and attitudinal opportunities as well as the requirements set for these that define their own agency.

In practice, these processes are intertwined. By examining them separately, we can make the gendering nature of the functions of an organisation visible. The following sections will provide more concrete points on these.

Organisational structures

The documents that define an organisation's activities form a part of the organisational structure. These include the legislation and agreements that direct organisational activities. In work organisations, these documents include collective agreements and meeting memorandums, job induction papers, all information material and all



publicly presented values. In school organisations, structures directing the activities include curricula. Documents directing organisational activities may have been constructed on the assumption of an abstract, genderless actor, whereby they can be gender-blind or even discriminatory. In Finland, organisations are under statutory obligation to draw up an equality plan – a document where systematic attention is given to the significance of gender in the organisation.

Documents

The 1995 reform of the Equality Act provided more tools for bringing equality into practice. Those working within organisations were provided legitimisation and tools by the Act to carry out equality work in different organisations – something that is most concretely manifested in the drawing up of equality plans. This still poses a challenge for organisations and their actors to make their methods and policies more equal. The drawing up of equality plans has also increased the need for expertise in the field of equality. Equality projects have served as promoters and forums for discussion on equality in organisations and made gendered power relations visible. The equality plans of organisations can also be seen as gender agreements⁴ that involve negotiations on power and the significance of gender.

Equality plans can make gender more public and clearer as a meaning that organises organisations. Recognising equality issues can lead into more concrete implementation and monitoring of equality plans. Equality work is supported by publicity, legislation and decisions that make it obligatory to take gender equality into consideration in all decision-making, planning and implementation as well as in the analysis of the effects of measures. This is referred to as the mainstreaming of equality. Mainstreaming requires a commitment by decision-makers and planners to equality promotion as part of their tasks. To achieve this, these people must have sufficient basic knowledge about the state of equality, and for this they need gender-segregated statistics, evaluations, impact analyses and research. HR statements also provide a good way of carrying out gender impact assessments. Information, induction and training strengthen people's commitment to and expertise in equality issues.⁵

Good practice

Assessing the gender impacts of the documents directing the activities of the organisation.

Example

"Equality issues are kind of part of my duties in my official capacity. And if we look at the past ten years, of course my duties also include monitoring how the equality plan and equality is realised. Now that we've deployed the plan and assigned responsibility to the departments, and they now have their own equality committees, it's nice to see that positive things have clearly begun to happen." Arvi (M)

Example

"The UN's had a significant role in that it was possible to legitimate the need through the UN before we got these women's studies and equality posts; first in work, I mean ILO's '66, equality in working life, and later on the Finnish Equality Acts and so on. In this, the UN's been the one to lean on. We need something that can be used to legitimise things, at least when a theme hasn't been dealt with that much, and that way it's worked in these



things. Of course, some say that it's also been an obstacle, that it's set the framework, and then people have acted accordingly." Saana (F)

Divisions

In organisations, divisions are created in issues including tasks and pay. These divisions produce gender in a manner whereby certain tasks are regarded as better suited for women than for men and vice versa.⁶ Pay still seems to be partly determined by gender.⁷ In practice, segregation – gender division in education and working life into different tasks – is a result of gender divisions.

Employment and pay

The recruitment of project actors often begins after having received a decision on project funding. Various delays may already have taken place at this stage, and the initial stage may be characterised by haste. The project workers' pace of work may turn out to be hectic, and their work history may consist of a series of busy periods lasting as long as projects do. At the turn of the millennium, fixed-term employment relationships increased among all ages of women employees.⁸ Typical for projects, short-term employment relationships may step up interpersonal competition and emphasise individualistic pursuit of self-interest. A special issue that needs to be resolved in projects is how the continuation of the project workers' employment is ensured. Project funding is used to produce and develop new forms of activity, after which the activities are made permanent. Employees are needed for this, too.

The resources of equality projects determine how meaningful it is to work in the project. People also carry out and plan development projects in their own time. They may contribute their own funds to hire substitutes, participate in training or get materials and equipment. Time and financial resources are a special challenge in the projects. In technology projects, the resource problem may come up when funds from the school budget are only allocated to teaching in the regular subjects and the procurement of the related materials. Schools do not tend to provide similar resources for larger themes such as technology.

Challenge

"But what's not so nice about this is that you do need some sort of funding. Schools are so poor that if something requires any travel at all, absence from work or buying materials or equipment, then if you don't get this from the project, the whole thing falls down. We won't get time off work if we can't get a substitute. And the principal won't grant the money for us. This is a practical thing that just has to be there, otherwise we can't do it. Of course, we've done a lot in our own time, using our own stuff. But there's got to be a limit to that, it simply isn't always possible." Matti (M)

Good practice

Paying wages, salaries and fees is a basic thing that may appear trivial, but in project work this may require special attention. Principles of pay where employee expertise is appreciated and their working hours are taken into consideration are equal practices. Projects should ensure that all work carried out under the project is made visible and paid for. The employer should attend to the employment relationships of the members of the

project organisation, guard the employees' interests regarding their right to holiday and pension accrual, organise occupational health care and support extending their employment contracts and making them permanent.

Interaction

Interaction is a basic activity in an organisation. Formal interaction situations in an organisation include teaching situations, negotiations, speeches, meetings and appraisals. Informal interaction situations include teachers' staff room discussions during breaks or discussions over lunch or coffee. Situations where preliminary decisions are made and new cooperation agreements are entered into while engaged in a physical or recreational activity can be regarded as a combination of formal and informal interaction situations.

Sexual harassment

We can talk about a heterosexual norm based on presumed heterosexuality in organisations. Sexual harassment⁹ can be regarded as one of the manifestations of the norm. Hegemonic heterosexist culture constructs hierarchies of power using gender and sexuality.¹⁰ There is a continuum between gendered power and violence¹¹. Projects addressing gendered power and violence have questioned the hierarchic and juxtaposing dichotomist gender system. One of their objectives has been to make gendered power relations visible. On the other hand, sexual harassment is also about sexism¹²: derogatory behaviour towards or treatment of a person on the basis of their gender. The Finnish Equality Act obliges employers to ensure that employees are not subjected to sexual harassment.¹³ There have been various campaigns to increase awareness about this.¹⁴

In the past few years, public discussion about sexual harassment has been increasing in universities¹⁵ and, to some extent, also in businesses. The discussion has also expanded into comprehensive education.¹⁶ The new national core curriculum for basic education only mentions harassment, so there is a danger of sexual harassment being disregarded¹⁷, despite the fact that forty per cent of 15-year-old girls have experienced sexual harassment.¹⁸ Projects on sexual and gendered power and violence have produced teaching material for those working in education and training.¹⁹

Good practice

Dealing in projects with gendered power and violence and developing, in cooperation with organisational actors, measures to prevent them. A good example of this is project campaigns where workplaces and educational institutions have been provided with information and guidelines.

Example

Equality projects and those working in them may face opposition, restrictions and questioning. Opportunities to discuss various issues related to equality have expanded over the years. This can be seen as expansion of the space for conversation and an opportunity to bring up issues experienced in the field of sexuality in organisations.

Organisations online

A project organisation may consist of actors who are geographically distant from each other. A hectic schedule and lack of resources may also result in interaction being based merely on communications technology. In such remote work, the equality of project participants is defined in interaction situations conveyed by technology. Technology can provide greater opportunities for participation (chance to choose the time and place) but also create new obstacles to overcome, including restricted opportunities for people to meet face to face and the related interaction and being together. Virtual environments have also created new spaces and opportunities for working on identities where people can overcome juxtapositions related to gender and sexuality regarding male and female genders constructed on heteronormativity.

Networks are created in power structures. Does networking leave some people in the shade? Working in the field of equality can be a lonely grind. At times it has been equality projects that have brought people together and enabled them to cooperate towards equality. A network provides valuable support in sustained equality action and situations. Cooperating in national and international networks generates resources for local equality work, too.

Good practice

Building cooperation between levels of education and between educational institutions and employers is important when efforts are made to influence people's choices. Awareness of further education and working life being prepared to welcome those who have chosen "differently" may also have an impact on the choices.

Example

On a national level, placing and planning project activities in a manner that includes schools, adult education and workplaces. The aim of this is to enable a dialogue between the different levels of actors in education and labour administration as was the case in the Nordic BRYT project.

Good practice

Creating various networks that support the project activities and the expertise of the actors, and paying special attention to ensuring that all of the project actors can participate in the networks that they find useful.

Example

"More communality, networking or cooperation between different actors and more attention to access to networking. It's, perhaps networking is not the right term, communality may not be the right word either, but being aware of what the aim is, and the people who are working on it, that they're more aware of being together or sharing the same aims. And the way I justify this is that it strongly seems to me that the results are short-lived. And when you're not there any more, to make sure that whatever the theme is actually exists on the course, then it's lost in an instant." Niina (F)

Images, awareness and symbols

Images are created of organisations such as schools, hospitals, armed forces, factories and universities. One of the objectives of desegregation projects has been to create positive images of tasks connected with industry and technology. Creating

images and awareness also involves ethical issues: are the images created diverse and truthful enough so that people will feel pleased with their choice of education or training and happy in their future job?²⁰

Power

Making and influencing work-related choices constitutes the use of power. Power is also used when creating images. The school's objective is to raise citizens capable of consideration and independent thought who are able to question things and influence them constructively. These educational aims of the school should not be disregarded when planning the objectives and methods of equality projects. This is a special, and also ethical, issue when taking into account the children and youth who are the target group of equality projects in the field of education. How well do equality projects take equality into consideration in their own target-setting? Are the children and youth allowed the opportunity to influence and critically assess the equality project and its contents? Ultimately, equality projects are about power and the use of power, which can be examined through conflict situations. Adapting the work of Stephen Lukes²¹, we can classify conflict situations into three main types:

1. open conflicts where the conflict is openly in view
2. covered-up conflicts where the parties do not bring the conflict up openly
3. exploitation that takes place without the object of power use realising it.

Hidden use of power can be seen as violence where the person themselves is not aware of being the object of power use and is therefore unable to influence it. In such cases, they have no opportunity for resistance or conflict, whereby the situation constitutes forceful use of power. When examining the use of power, attention is drawn to the conflict situation, awareness of one's own objectives and the varying extents of opportunity to deal with the conflict. Hidden conflicts are created when an opposing view is not voiced or when information about the opportunities is not conveyed between actors. Actors may consciously accept something or compromise their own objectives in order to secure their own position.

Organisations produce and maintain structures that enable the hidden use of power. Since power is gendered, the hierarchies are also gendered. Gender and sexuality have a key role in the production of hierarchies. A social historical study makes the gendered nature of power more transparent. An illustrative example of this is women's position in societal decision-making and its formation in historical movement.

In the Nordic countries and Europe, decision-making can be regarded as gendered as women are underrepresented in political decision-making bodies.²² As a result, political power is also gendered. Power and political decision-making have constituted a central dimension for equality research and the mainstreaming of equality.²³

In the 1970s, Berit Ås studied the mechanisms of power, specifying them as Making Invisible, Ridiculing, Withholding Information, Damned If You Do And Damned If You Don't and Heaping Blame and Putting to Shame. Knowing and recognising these mechanisms is considered important to enable liberation from their influence and combating them.²⁴

Ingrid Pincus studied the realisation of gender equality in local politics in the 1990s. She examined the use of power in municipal politics and in the mainstreaming of equality. The table below presents the general outlines of the forms of power exercised to hinder the mainstreaming of equality.²⁵ Direct barriers are directed against persons working towards equality. Indirect barriers are directed at measures, whereby the equality obligation is only seemingly met. Inactivity entails non-implementation, whereby demands for equality are disregarded.



FORM**EXPRESSED AS**

Inactivity	Non-implementation
Indirect Maintaining existing values, norms, procedures and routines (bias)	Sham-decisions, passivity, indifference, co-optation, denial and withdrawal of resources, discrediting
Direct Activities directed against persons working for change	Branding, discrediting, harassment

(Pincus, 2003)

The dimensions developed by Pincus may increase our understanding about the difficulties faced by those working in equality projects. Barriers to equality can be taken into consideration in stages as early as the design of equality projects, in which case special arrangements could be made to support those working in equality projects and their work.

Good practice

Discussing and examining power in the project. Are power and responsibility equally distributed among the actors? How could the situation be changed?

Example

*"Many have encountered it in the way that as long as you're promoting the themes of equality, that it's mostly in the dimension of becoming aware, that it won't pick on anyone's field really, the you'll be left alone more. But if you actually start picking on something, that's when you get resistance."
"I do feel I've also encountered obvious restrictions, that certain things (to promote equality) can be done, but with anything on a wider scale you get questioned." Niina (F)*

Conflict situations

Each organisation has a basic task that they perform. It may have been organised hierarchically, in which case its activities entail implementing the objectives set by the administration or management. In a non-hierarchical organisation, leadership and management can be shared, so objectives, methods and policies are agreed mutually. In both models of organisation, interaction has a key role when agreements are made on objectives, methods and policies alike.

Projects towards equality aim at a change – equality in objectives, methods and policies alike. Doing things differently can cause a conflict in the organisation. This seems like a disturbance in the functioning of the organisation – things are not proceeding the way people are used to. What should be done? Organisational practices can be assessed from the equality perspective and, where necessary, the activities of the organisation can be changed.

The way conflicts are responded to and dealt with can be evasive or negative – or conflicts can be approached as an open challenge. Those acting in an organisation need security in change, tolerance of uncertainty and opportunities for fruitful conflict resolution. In an organisation, conflicts can be solved in mutual

discussions and settlement of the underlying issues with those involved. In an equal organisation, supporting internal expertise and agency is important, including when solving conflicts. Conflict resolution can be practiced in cooperation between the organisational actors.

Expectations about the "leader" of the organisation as the conflict resolver may involve maintenance of a hierarchy whereby they do not necessarily support equality in the operating culture, agencies and responsibilities but rather the acceptance of an unequal division of power and responsibility. Supervisory and management tasks have become more common, despite efforts to flatten the organisation. Despite the organisation of work based on group work in industry and services, the positions still include supervisors and managers although the levels of hierarchy may have been cut. Supervisory and management duties have reduced among those with higher education, which is related to independent expertise in the tasks.²⁶ Uncertainty about the organisation's ability to solve conflicts and problems may lead into seeking external help. External conflict resolvers such as workplace consultants can be seen as neutral and the only way out in a situation where there is no mutual trust between people. Resorting to suppressing a conflict is problematic from the perspectives of equality, organisation, the actors and the process towards a change.

Good practice

Making a mutual plan on how to equally solve any conflicts during the project.

Example

"However, if some major machinery starts to knock you down and you're alone in it, it's not an easy spot to be in. Something that I absolutely see as a good practice is paying attention to the fact that, if you see someone promoting equality with good intentions, then you won't leave them alone during the times when it gets bumpy." Niina (F)

Self-definition

Self-definition is work on one's identity. It is a multidimensional and reciprocal process of an organisation and its actors. Self-definition takes place in organisational structures and processes (divisions, interaction, images and awareness). Agency is a dimension related to self-definition that is defined in the daily functions of the organisation.

Agency

Project organisations implement the tasks set for the project in the action plan. The project objective and activities define, in their part, the shape of the project organisation. How is agency defined in an organisation? A hierarchical organisation is constructed on unequal agency. The relations between the management and the subordinates are, on one hand, constructed through control and, on the other, through obedience. In an organisation based on mutual agreement, agency is constructed through free flow of information – communal solving of issues as a principle that empowers the agency of each actor and liberates organisational resources. A project can be a learning process where, from time to time, people get back to the plan and conduct a review: what are we doing in the project and how are we doing it? There may be a need to change job descriptions as the project proceeds and the project plan is specified further or changes.



How an organisation is perceived also guides what it turns into in organisational practices. The expectations regarding the kinds of agency in the organisation determine which actors are included in the organisation. This is about the use of organisational power, which restricts the activities permitted for people. By following these organisational restrictions and regulating their activities in relation to them, the members of an organisation secure issues including their employment relationship. There is a danger of ending up outside the organisation. High unemployment rates, dismissals and general job uncertainty also increase the organisational power. What becomes the space for change is the space left between critical awareness and the structures that define the organisational activities where constant negotiations are carried out on issues including equality. If the organisation supports actors who have initiative, share their ideas and participate, this is likely to show in the results achieved by the organisation: it creates new innovations. If challenges are not presented or encouraged, agency in the organisation becomes more routine-like. Being given and accepting responsibility helps develop a sense of responsibility.

Decision-making processes are crucial to organisational activities. In hierarchical organisations, those "at the top" may have been pre-defined as those participating in decision-making while the opportunities of those "lower" to participate vary. In non-hierarchical organisations, the aim is to maximise the participation in decision-making and empowerment of organisational actors (see 'Gender'). In organisations based on empowerment, the members take responsibility of their own actions unlike in power-based organisations where the management or administration is in charge. In an equal organisation, the actors' expertise is utilised efficiently.

Expertise

Power is connected with expertise. Achieving an expert status is influenced by socially produced power and value arrangements, including gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, social class and political or religious orientation, due to which people who are equal in competence do not necessarily reach an equal status.²⁷ These asymmetries have an impact in our culture in the same way as in individual organisations, and therefore they can determine the development of unequal organisational interaction, rendering the person's actual expertise of secondary importance.

Good practice

Examining and monitoring how expert status is defined in the organisation, how it is formed and what kinds of changes take place in the definition of expertise.

Example

"You study occupations to find which ones dominate, men or women, and see if the boss is a man or a woman and why this is the case. And you don't find that many exceptions, but last time we found a girl at the car repair shop at the car dealer's. She was doing her practical training there. That was a surprise to the boys, having a girl in an overall show up in a place like that. It was really good as a situation, it really made the boys talk about whether she knows how to fix a car or not." Matti (M)

Good practice

Practising equal action in a project organisation. Discussing the organisation: the project objective (what will be done), working methods (how it will be done) and processes (what will come out of it).

Example

Surprising situations will appear during a project, but even then you can, through collaboration, look for a positive solution that enables the project's fruitful progress in line with the objectives set for the project.

Organisational resources

Embodiment and sexuality organise an organisation by creating divisions (segregation, pay gaps, men and women's break facilities, toilets, etc), interaction, images and self-definition. Human bodies and people's gender and sexuality are the organisation's driving force and resource. Bodies are not, however, easily perceived as "belonging" to organisations. Organisations still need physical employees in the care, education and research occupations although the majority of manufacturing and, ever more and more, also services have been mechanised.

Embodied organisations

Gender, sexuality and body are problematic in terms of administration. Both male and female bodies have physical needs that are controlled. The use of time, including breaks, visits to the toilet and movement, is controlled. Those working on the higher hierarchical levels have fewer restrictions and more benefits when it comes to satisfying physical needs. In work organisations, particular objects of control are dimensions related to reproduction and sexuality. This control is stricter on women's bodies than it is on men's. Women are controlled because of the reproduction potential of their bodies. Sexual harassment in the workplace can also be seen as demonstration and maintenance of heterosexuality.

Good practice

Supporting men taking parental leaves and supporting young women in their career development.

Example

"I believe that er, being a woman hasn't been a problem but being also a mother and a wife of someone in the same field, that's not easy. And it's not easy to be a mother, breastfeed and travel with a child in the world, and things like that. Since I've had these experiences of my own, I've taken them into consideration in my own circles afterwards. The way I see it is that you can have bigger influence in your own circles and trying to take into account how it would be easier for young post-graduate students to be a mother and a wife in various international cooperation situations that require more than just being there." Hertta (F)

Employee embodiment manifests or may be partly hidden in situations such as recruitment. Organisations can create part-time and low-pay jobs as well as "flexible jobs suitable for women", which offer no opportunities for career development. In business, some of the positions traditionally held by women have been outsourced to temporary work agencies providing part-time and fixed-term employees.²⁸ Social equality policies influence organisations and, in the end, individual opportunities,



too. In the Nordic countries, obligations related to reproduction that are directed at women have been questioned. Issues related to reproduction have been influenced through persistent and goal-oriented equality policies.²⁹ Child care has been organised by society for the children of employed people, and work organisations support men's taking parental leaves. Measures included in equality policies have enabled women's employment and serious approach to their own careers as well as having children and participating in child care.

On the other hand, organisations support gender neutral – suppressed – knowledge of gender, which is based on the apparent unembodiment of employees. An apparently unembodied employee is a manifestation of a universal individual. When organisational practices, methods and policies are examined, the supposed male body of the universal person manifests, for example, as disregard for menstrual cycle, pregnancy and breastfeeding as possible characteristics. This excludes female bodies. Gender produced in organisations is linked with other organisations in society that maintain and produce gender, and these determine the status of female bodies in society as a whole. Gender equality cannot be achieved if the functioning of the female body is classified as inferior, questioned or if its needs are disregarded in the organisation.

Gender is produced and maintained in work arrangements, rules and regulations as well as in the definition of the relation between the workplace and place of residence. Work can also be presented as separate from non-working life and, at times, as having priority. Many people experience difficulties in fitting the expectations set on them as employees into their daily lives. Projects campaigning for the reconciliation of paid work and non-working life have been deconstructing this setup.

Good practice

Assessing the gender impacts of the organisation's tasks and facility arrangements.

Example

It was observed that, on average, female employees had less space available for them than male employees. Women's offices were smaller, and it was more common for them to share an office. The spaces were divided more equally in accordance with tasks and needs.

Summary

An equal organisation

Equality projects are designed as projects with a beginning, implementation and completion phase. Project activities can be primarily defined by the regulations of the organisation governing it. However, regulations that take the special characteristics of the project into account and direct the activities can also be planned and agreed for a project.

Good practice

At the beginning of the project, negotiating and agreeing on the project organisation's good practices, constructing a space for possible further negotiations and being open for further negotiations whenever necessary during the project.

Example

"And we started to think which way we should take to address equality. It was just a general equality project, and we could make it specific in whichever way we wanted. And we met once a month, planned things, what they could be, and told each other what we'd come up with and assigned tasks. Which means we were learning together. Then we always had a book to read, and one of us would introduce the main themes and there would be a lot of discussion. This was every month if not even a couple of times a month. We followed the action research model. The way the whole thing worked was that the best thing about it was that you began to observe yourself. And I still haven't stopped that. I'm still checking things to see if there might be an equality aspect there. I think that was good that phase."
Matti (M)

Negotiating and agreeing on methods and policies requires time. In fixed-term projects aiming at increasing the expertise of the actors, equal organisation is crucial to the objective. In equal organisations, actors can influence the way the objective is pursued. The actors can also be jointly responsible for the project and its objective.

A project may also provide the opportunity to practise doing things differently – acting on the basis of mutual solidarity and equality. Creating such common space for discussion, listening to diverse views and decentralising decision-making in a project can support and teach a horizontally and vertically equal work and operating culture within the project organisation. In concrete terms, this means deciding on the common objective, sharing and acquiring expertise and conducting joint situational reviews from time to time.

Actors in an equality project may face demeaning, their work being questioned or other forms of othering. Conflicts can be seen as opportunities where the values and principles that direct action become visible. People also become aware of and discuss the wider organisational structures and processes, which may enable the redefinition of the organisation. Gender equality is an organisational issue. Equality work can begin with the appointment of an equality working group. A person responsible for equality issues can be hired and an experienced equality consultant can be used to support the equality work.

Good practice

Applying task rotation to prevent the creation of hierarchies while also increasing the skills of the actors. In an equal organisation, a clear common objective to which people are committed is crucial. Instead of voting, negotiating until reaching a solution that can be accepted by every member of the organisation.

Example

"Although you can promote equality and get a lot of work done by doing things alone and in your own environment, but isn't that an awfully slow method? Orientation in the way that 'let's make this issue as public and visible as possible', it may be that this way you can make things happen a lot quicker than operating in your own environment. When you have very little backing, it's hard to do things; when you're alone, you can easily be put down. With backing, things are different." Niina (F)


Notes

- ¹ The activities of a bureaucratic organisation are determined by the formality of interpersonal relations, professionalism and bureaucracy regulated by norms and official regulations. In such organisations, people have jobs where individuals can be replaced by other individuals with the skills required for the tasks. The organisations operate in buildings with spatial solutions that may convey an image of their goals. The activities of modern organisations can be based on a bureaucratic administration model with a clear hierarchy of power relations. The organisation seeks to fulfil its purpose on the basis of written rules. In a bureaucratic organisation, each official deals with issues related to their own specific area. Ideal-type efficiency and objectivity associated with bureaucracy have been questioned as they have also been found to decrease people's initiative in their work.
- ² The factors critical to a non-hierarchical organisational structure are related to time use, emotional intensity, non-democratic customs and values, environmental requirements and individual differences. The difference between bureaucratic and non-hierarchical organisations is not unambiguous; instead, it is qualitatively different in relation to the above critical factors. For instance, the use of time in meetings can in non-hierarchical organisations be seen as time-consuming because they aim at a consensus. However, in bureaucratic organisations, discussions may turn out lengthy because a decision cannot be reached. The emotional closeness of members of non-hierarchical organisations can make decision-making situations speedy because people know each other's views reasonably well, but conflicts can also be strong in these organisations as relationships are highly personal. Iannello 1992.
- ³ Acker 1990, 1992.
- ⁴ Rissanen & Kolehmainen 2004
- ⁵ Nurmi, 1998.
- ⁶ E.g. Kolehmainen 1999.
- ⁷ Petäjäniemi 2004.
- ⁸ Sutela, Hanna 1999.
- ⁹ Sexual harassment is unsolicited, unilateral, unpleasant conduct towards another person or group that utilises sexuality or images construed from sexuality. Its most common forms include sexually obtrusive gestures or expressions, vulgar comments, off-colour jokes, undue remarks or questions about a person's body, clothes or private life, display of pornographic material as well as letters, phone calls and e-mail messages with sexual undertones, groping and other unwanted physical contact, proposals and demands for sexual intercourse; the most serious cases may involve rape or attempted rape. The harasser can be a man or woman – co-worker, supervisor, manager, subordinate or customer. In cases of gender and sexual harassment, the issue may feel so shameful that the threshold to talk about it is too high, and the events are left unprocessed. (Sunnari et al. 2005)
- ¹⁰ Epstein, 1997.
- ¹¹ Gendered violence refers to a verbal, visual or other conduct or structure that is based on disrespectful, subordinating or undervaluing attitudes towards a person or gender and that in some way or another aims at subordinating or silencing them but does not directly seem to involve sexuality or sexuality constructions.
- ¹² Sunnari et al. 2003.
- ¹³ The Act on Equality between Women and Men (8 August 1986/609) Section 6: Employer's duty to promote equality (17 February 1995/206).

- ¹⁴ Campaigns include the Finnish Sports Federation's campaign against sexual harassment in sports and physical activity and the guidelines (in Finnish, also available in English) for workplaces regarding sexual harassment by the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions.
- ¹⁵ E.g. Mankkinen 1995, Sinkkonen 1997, Varjus 1997, Husu 2001, Heikkinen 2003, Sunnari et al. 2005.
- ¹⁶ E.g. Aaltonen 2003, Hautajärvi 2003, Kangasvuori 2003, Korhonen and Kuusi 2003, Lehtonen 2003.
- ¹⁷ Tuija Tikkanen 2004.
- ¹⁸ Honkatukia, Päivi 2000.
- ¹⁹ E.g. Sunnari et al. 2003.
- ²⁰ Cf. 'The life cycle of an equality project' below.
- ²¹ Lukes, 1972.
- ²² Bergqvist et al. 2001, Nurmi 1999.
- ²³ Holli 2003, Horelli & Saari 2002, Bergqvist et al. 2001.
- ²⁴ The National Council of Women of Finland published a booklet in Finnish based on *De fem härskarteknikerna* (The Five Master Suppression Techniques) by Berit Ås. <http://kilden.forskningsradet.no/c16881/artikkel/vis.html?tid=35123>
- ²⁵ Pincuis, Ingrid 2003.
- ²⁶ Lehto & Sutela 2004.
- ²⁷ The communal regulation system of an organisation defines expertise and its construction. Expert power can be based on hierarchical power positions or differences in expertise. Differences in expertise can be based on moral, mental or more general competences. When an expert seeks to use their competences for the benefit of all of the members of the organisation instead of just pursuing their own goals, we can talk about moral competence. In such cases, expertise is formed as a social process. An expert's knowledge is finite, so it is useful and desirable to establish groups of experts. The precondition for the creation of a group is following rules of communication that enable equal participation by everyone in the group's activities. When expertise is defined on the basis of mental competence, other members of the organisation can stress a person's status without the person having an official status. Expertise can be viewed as a more general capability to take in new information (Anttonen & Riimala 1998, 81–83).
- ²⁸ E.g. Hyvinvointivaltio organisoiituu uudelleen – entä sukupuolijärjestelmä (2001).
- ²⁹ Julkunen 2002, 37.

THE LIFE CYCLE OF AN EQUALITY PROJECT



 *"But the biggest thing is what we really do in our everyday lives."*
Raija (F)

Orientation towards equality work

In the formulation of the life span of a project that takes equality into consideration, the starting point is gender equality as a common societal objective specified in legislation and agreements. It is evident that it is difficult and even inefficient to try to promote equality separate from other activities. It must be incorporated into all planning, decision-making and activities. On a general level, this is about assessing the gender impacts of planning, decision-making and activities and, where necessary, correcting them to ensure that they promote equality. The objective must be concretised specifically for each project. The question is: how can we act here and now to reach the objective of equality?

In the spirit of the Equality Act, we have decided that every project is an equality project. We shall start by mapping the situation, needs and resources.

Launching the activities

ASSESSING THE SITUATION, NEEDS AND RESOURCES

When assessing the situation, it may be useful to think of equality as a human rights and justice issue. This may help avoid simplifying and juxtaposing things and make visible other differences and inequalities than those related to gender. When we look at girls and boys, women and men by factors such as age, disability, health, ethnicity, ideology or area of residence, we will find that there are many different kinds of gender. What are the problems in each context? How could they be solved?

The resources available should be assessed. These include knowledge of equality issues, local conditions such as the business structure, labour market, educational opportunities, community structure and services available. These also include highly concrete things such as the premises available, including suitable social facilities for different groups, the provision of facilities and opportunities for physical activity in relation to fair needs or a ladder to reach the pornographic images once pinned on the walls.

Local everyday assessments can also unearth silenced or hidden resources or a need for them. A workplace may have related expertise that has never been brought up before, or participation in training may be complicated by responsibilities in non-working life such as caring for an elderly parent living in another town. People's lives as a whole must be taken into consideration in the assessment.



THE OBJECTIVE AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The objective set should be as realistic and feasible as possible. The activities should be focused on something that will change practices and orders during the project (such as organising turns for physical activity in a way that will not result in disparity) and the results of which can be disseminated and applied after the project without any extra costs. At its most intimate, the objective is to influence the objective-setters own activities. However, this is also the case when the objective is outside one's own activities, say, the reform of teaching material. Ideas for target-setting can be found from previous projects, see 'Finding information' below. The project itself must be organised in a manner that advances equality. (More on this under 'The significance of an equal project organisation' below.)

When considering the objective and measures, it is also a good idea to think about the assessment of results. Achieving visible and measurable changes is often a slow process. We should not allow pre-set objectives and measures to direct our work too much, either, as a one-track pursuit of objectives that are set in great detail may result in one-sided activities. Efforts towards equality can sometimes yield major results, including within the project organisation and interpersonal activities. It pays to look at the objectives and outcomes as something flexible and in motion.

In the spirit of the Equality Act, each one of us should promote equality in all of our activities. For this we need information, which often means the need for further resources to organise training, for example. Further resources may be needed for other things, too: if it is found that the training premises of car mechanics at the local vocational institute only have social facilities for one gender, making it harder for the other gender to study, separate facilities must be built or provided to increase equality. Negotiations on further resources are also in order in cases including when a group of people at a workplace want to set up an equality committee and need management support and time during working hours for this.

OUTSIDE FUNDING

■ *"Actually I'm sure I wouldn't have taken up a project this large if (the organisation) hadn't said that 'since you're obviously the only one with previous experience about equality projects, that couldn't we draw up the project plan for the programme'. Although I was still wondering at that stage that where on earth were we going to find the resources to do it. Well, what it meant was that I cleared by my desk and for two weeks I wouldn't do anything else but (...) the application. When the others went who knows where, I'd just be sitting here working on the application." Anja (F)*

The majority of actual equality projects have been implemented with funding specifically reserved or acquired for the purpose. Paradoxically, this also seems to be one of the obstacles to the dissemination of their results: as soon as the funding is over, new practices that may even be proven good might be left unapplied if this would require special resources.

When applying for funding, it is worthwhile to concentrate on presenting a good project idea in writing. National and international financers have set funding principles that the objectives and methods of equality work need to follow. This is often the precondition for being granted funding. Therefore completing an application for funding also requires the ability to use different discourses. It is good to ask for



help from outside experts when drawing up an application. When applying for international funding, you can also ask for consultation from EU advisors. You can and should also negotiate with the financier.

Good practice

Budgeting for training and information, monitoring the project research and the related publications as well as continuous planning and review during the process.

Example

Budgeting should be as realistic as possible in relation to the present needs. The project may even have to close due to insufficient consideration for practical reasons such as failure to budget for transport arrangements required due to lack of public transport.

Good practice

Learning to see funding as something constructed within societal power relations as this will help position equality work and utilise different discourses in order to be granted financial resources. Proficiency in administrative jargon is required when completing an application for public project funding.

Example

The closer our observation gets to the year 2004, the stronger the focus on technology in the equality projects. The criteria for funding have favoured projects attracting girls and women into technology. Correspondingly, projects attracting boys and men into fields including the social, health and education sectors have been almost non-existent. Consider what this means for gender equality and inequality and whose interests it reveals from the viewpoint of societal power relations. How could you utilise these observations when applying for funding?

INFORMATION

Human and intellectual resources

"The organisation administering the project was not committed to the contents and objectives of a women's project, and they had appointed clerical staff to administer this project of ours. There was this conflict right from the start, but I didn't notice it 'cause I was too deeply involved in it. There was a structural and fundamental conflict in the very basic setup." Carin (F)

Projects paying attention to equality require a wide range of competences. Those with administrative tasks should also have knowledge about equality issues. Experts and research findings should be utilised when planning and implementing the project activities.

However small the project, it should not be endeavoured alone. When considering actors, it is a good idea to contact experienced people familiar with the topic at an early stage. Asking for advice from those with more experience is always recommended and should not be seen as a failure.

In projects specialising in equality promotion, research and previous projects in the topic as well as their outcomes should be studied before actually starting the planning stage (see 'Finding information' below). This increases the actors'

competence and helps find actors. Sources of information about previous projects include the electronic databases on EU-funded equality projects, and project publications are available directly from the Ministries involved. Information about research on equality can be found from sources including libraries and the websites of Ministries.

Good practice

Inviting experts in equality work to join the project and studying existing research findings and previous equality projects, especially if the actors do not have previous competence and experience in equality work. It is worthwhile to utilise existing networks and create new ones. Studying the methods and outcomes of previous equality projects increases competence and helps position the equality work.

Example

An equality consultant working in a large company was no longer able to carry the responsibility for equality issues for the entire company on their own. The consultant negotiated with the executive group and managed to get its help in establishing an equality committee. The committee was appointed, and members were trained in equality issues. The committee began to systematically survey pay differences and job descriptions and drew up various programmes towards the advancement of the status of women within the organisation. In addition, the equality committee launched the implementation of equality projects within the organisation and explored ways to mainstream gender into all personnel training offered by the company.

Example

Established in 1983, Femina Borealis – Women and Development in the North – is a multisectoral and multidisciplinary network of women activists and those working and doing research in community planning and education. It supports and participates in research, development and training activities in the Barents region.

Equality training

"And every project involves training, so we must have received more training than you would on average." Matti (M)

To acquire information, it is good to organise training that is long enough and preferably takes place at the initial stage of the activities. Experiences gained from projects implemented show that training can be blended training, which is often most efficient when employing guided independent study and face-to-face discussions. The need for training is great in projects, and its role is vital to the success of equality work.

Example

"This training was like them presenting us with facts and theory, too, and, and then there was the other side of these personal experiences, which is what we explored quite a bit in the groups and discussions. And then of course the third thing was incorporating it in the workplace, I mean actually doing the work and carrying out the equality plan in the workplace." Iris (F)

Example

"It was somehow interesting to realise that, that the way people take it as something so personal, involving experiences (...) and then on the other hand these are also (...) wider societal structural things based on certain facts or figures, so what I find interesting in this is that we're sort of living in two worlds all the time. And they have to be taken into consideration in the training, too." Iris (F)

Finding information

Over the past thirty years, equality projects have produced a wealth of information and various methods and tools for equality work. We have gathered a selection of links to easily accessible and practical handbooks and guides produced by projects. To ensure ease of access, the guides chosen as examples are from recent projects.

Good practices for equality work in education and working life

Example

Handbooks and guides

- ☐ The handbook Be Equal · Be Different, a tool for change produced by the project Be Equal · Be Different <http://www.outhouse.ie/BEBD/>
- ☐ The WomenIT project's guide Equality for Everyday Life, Equality Workbook intended especially for businesses and the guide WomentIT Projects and Good Practices http://www.womenit.info/in_english.php
- ☐ Good practices for equality work in technology generated by the Mirror project. www.mirror4u.net/opettajat/materiaalit.html
- ☐ Tasavertaiset työmarkkinat -projektin Opas ei-tyypillisten valintojen tukemiseen www.mol.fi
- ☐ How to Mainstream Gender Equality and The Gendered Account of the Personnel as a Tool for Mainstreaming Equality in Finnish Ministries by the Development of Mainstreaming Methodology project www.eurofem.net/valtavirtaan/english.html

Information, studies and publications:

- ☐ The Minna portal www.minna.fi
- ☐ The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health <http://www.stm.fi/Resource.phx/eng/subjt/gendr/index.htm>
- ☐ The European Social Fund in Finland www.esr.fi
- ☐ The Hilma portal http://www.helsinki.fi/hilma/en_ja_ru/index_en.htm

BECOMING AWARE OF THE THEORIES THAT DIRECT OUR ACTIVITIES

Whether we are aware of it or not, our activities are always directed by a theory or a combination of theories. In equality promotion, it is crucial to expose the theories, perceptions and images of equality of those involved in the project as these influence what is done and how. They also result in differences in the evaluation of the results achieved. Say, if we think that there are two genders that are essentially different and complimentary in ways including girls and women being timid and boys and men brave, we will act differently from the way we would if we thought the manifestations of bravery and timidity depended on the situation and conditions.

Good practice


Recognising the theories that direct our activities because this enables us to work on them and discuss them with the other actors. This usually calls for training and support by equality experts. Becoming aware of the theories that direct our own activities also helps us understand the other actors' different ways of thinking and doing things. Our work becomes efficient and innovative.

Example

"The key thing is to recognise any discriminating practices in your own behaviour, I mean any practices in your own behaviour or your organisational behaviour that result in discrimination or kind of otherness. I mean in what way I might cause otherness in other people, often without realising it. It's an awfully essential, another essential objective, in addition to diversity, that we all really easily create otherness and don't necessarily even recognise it, and recognising this." Jari (M)

Launching and establishing the activities

PLANNING IS A PROCESS

 *"You see actually it was quite a luxurious situation, to have one person's working hours totally available (...). That after all there was something like four months at the beginning of the project totally devoted to it, to finding a cooperation network." Titta (F)*

Once the preliminary plan has been completed and the resources booked or acquired, it is time to plan the actual activities in greater detail. In projects with several actors, everyone should participate in the planning. Planning should be seen as a continuous process where the objectives set are assessed and new ones may be set. Projects that have created continuity have constructed things on top of what has already been done and learned, so experiences already gained should be utilised in project planning. This helps avoid repeating the same problems over and over again while also enabling to follow equality developments at a more general level in society and the world, including in legislation, the labour market and research.



Enough time should be allocated for finding suitable partners. This is also associated with bearing the ethical responsibility for the consequences of the activities. If, for example, the project steers people towards choosing non-traditional education, training or occupation, cooperation should be sought with the continuing education institutions and workplaces to ensure that they are prepared to welcome the newcomers. In practice, partners are often found through personal contacts and informal channels. It is also worthwhile to contact public authorities. Equality projects carried out over the decades are quite extensively documented, and expert registers also include those on equality. The Internet is another good source of information.

Over the years, projects have become more technologically oriented, which means an increase in technological discourse and an emphasis on efficiency, rationality and productivity. A technological interest represents a way of seeing the world and people's activities through objective truths, regularities that organise actions, rules and predictability. Projects talk about pre-set objectives and measures through which the objective is reached. The project results are referred to as operating models, tools and products. The projects make a commitment to produce and productise these results, which must be easily transferable for use by others. Such discourse emphasises the direct utilisability of information. It may also obscure what is really being done. If work is directed by technological orientation, the scale of activities may remain quite narrow. Just like any other process of change, taking equality into consideration is full of surprises.

Good practice

Taking the time to carefully plan the activities and ensure the commitment of as many actors as possible. Planning the activities of an equality project or project that takes equality into consideration should not be left to depend on a few volunteers. Actively looking for information and opportunities for cooperation.

Example

Actors planning an equality project wanted to put an extra effort into planning the work as they realised that a successful planning process would support the activities throughout the project. "Well, it happened really nicely in that normally we'd always try and find a place where we'd feel nice and comfortable." A pleasant common atmosphere was created by choosing a specific time and place for planning, with all those involved in equality work taking part. "We could like take the time for a bigger planning period and go somewhere in the countryside, somewhere where like we were in the middle of the wilderness and, and had good food. And, and then the planning, or our activities, the activities of us trainers always involved us also looking after ourselves." In planning, special attention was paid to ensuring that every actor was heard, and the success in planning was also assessed at the end of meetings. "If we're not feeling well, we won't be able to provide good training. If we're not feeling good about being together, the conflicts will show. If, if we've planned the training in poor conditions, it will show in the quality of planning. And that was, we thought it was like obvious that that's how it goes in life." Laila (F)

Example

"People must get to do it by themselves before they'll believe and learn and get involved. To plan by themselves, get to make a commitment, become motivated, and so on. Then all the time there has to be in-built train-- , training in the sense that it supports the development work." Merja (F)

Example

You can look for partners from mailing lists and be boldly and genuinely open for new cooperation opportunities.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN EQUAL PROJECT ORGANISATION

■ *"I felt that it wasn't wise to fight a lonely battle against an organisation or their views in these issues – they'd always be stronger. They showed us and me who's in power." Carin (F)*

The project's own organisation is a testing ground for equality promotion. It appears that the more hierarchical the project organisation is, the more difficult it is for it to promote equality. Yet it is hard to avoid hierarchy, especially if the project takes place within a hierarchical organisation. The organisation's formal relations related to liabilities and responsibilities may be in conflict with the creation of practices that are necessary for and aim at equality promotion. A project may expose gendering and unequalising orders and practices in the parent organisation that the organisation may not necessarily be willing to change straight away. This may result in tensions and conflicts in the actual project that can prove difficult to solve. Conflicts and tensions are not as such a bad thing, however. What is essential is how they are dealt with.

■ *"I'm sure everyone in our group has experienced and will share my feeling of a sort of invalidation and belittling. And it was to an awfully large extent related to decision-making, to who's allowed to make decisions and so on." Carin (F)*

Democratic and fully participatory activities do not happen automatically. There is no quick and easy fix to deconstruct hierarchical power relations. Giving up the top-down order of things – which people are familiar with and perhaps to a certain extent even find safe – may initially evoke opposition and even fear. In an open and transparent organisation, communication and interaction methods have a crucial role.


Good practice

Dismantling hierarchical structures and creating a flat, open and transparent project organisation where objectives and activities are negotiated on between the actors and where decisions are made together. Motivating the activities by the principle of diversity and an understanding of this being a necessity. Also discussing equal mutual practices and the meanings of gender among the participants.


Example

Hierarchical organisational management was dismantled by increasing the transparency and openness of decision-making and communications through providing access to decision-making for those affected by the decisions. With the work schedule being hectic, this could be done by using tools including phone negotiations and discussions on the project mailing list. The change in the working methods also encountered resistance.

EQUALITY IS ABOUT NEGOTIATION

 *"These processes, if they're to happen at all, often they depend on the initiative of one active person or more in the workplace" Tarja (F)*

Negotiating on equality requires many types of skill and knowledge. Although statistics show disparity between the genders, this and the significance of equality promotion may be difficult to recognise locally. It may help to look into the obligations set and opportunities provided by the Equality Act.

 *"And then when they got to know me a bit, that I might question the old-timers' thinking at the group meetings, then, well, then I wasn't that reliable any more (...) I've been there to find that the old-timers will tolerate a woman up the front because of her age and gender for image reasons, as long as she keeps her mouth shut and smiles. H'm. But then you become dangerous if you open your mouth and say what you think." Tarja (F)*

Equality promotion calls for negotiation skills, which in practice includes the person(s) doing equality work being able, whenever necessary, to switch from one discourse to another. In order to launch equality work and be granted resources, aspects such as the positive impacts of equality work on productivity, efficiency and competitiveness or interactive skills can be emphasised. When different discourses are utilised, equality work becomes possible in situations and places that might otherwise be inaccessible. At the same time, however, it is good to examine the discourses used and think about what we actually mean by the terms used and what their concrete meanings are specifically in our case. Choices and decisions may have different impacts on women and men, and these may then affect issues including productivity and efficiency.

Good practice

Allowing potential stakeholders to define the problems and needs by themselves. This requires the mastery of different discourses and translation skills.

Example

"...that (...) the senior management are involved right from the beginning, but the same also applies to, could I say, the organisation's actual working or performing level, they're the ones that should also be involved at a very early stage in er defining what equality or diversity actually means in practice in the workplace. I mean that this should take place, it must take place in the language that, that the people feel is their own." Jari (M)

Example

"It's like having a kind of inquiring touch, like asking if you could think of it this way, if you've ever thought of this or if you've tried that, or. It's about having an inquiring touch, inquiring touch and kind of being interested." Iris (F)

Example

"Conciliating, listening, looking for the gaps that let you get through to take the next step in a positive, constructive manner. Getting people involved in cooperation." Merja (F)

EQUALITY WORK AND DEVELOPMENT

■ *"That it just won't happen in a snap, and no matter how someone or many people say a dozen times that this is what should be done, there just won't be any progress (...)." Iris (F)*

Equality work is often talked about as development work, and a project is launched when there is a need to develop something. Project activities shape the views on development, and development easily turns into short-lived activities with a pre-set initial, middle and final phases. Therefore development work in the form of a project may even be a hindrance to change and to the creation of new ways of thinking and doing things.

Development work is not a new phenomenon, but the 1990s saw a greater market orientation in the field, brought about by a greater focus on targets and results. Development is a Western product, with its origins in the desire during the Enlightenment to question previous ideas and generate belief in the triumph of Western progress. On a wider scale, development has been positioned as a technical problem where Northern experts deliver their technologies, institutions and practices to the South in the name of progress. Development has been criticised for its rhetorics focusing on the interests of working life as well as development practices being defined by capitalism, market-orientation and the information society.

Just like any activity towards a change, development is always about power relations, and terms including 'objects of development' may be used in the context. One party to the development activities assumes the role of an active actor and the other that of a passive recipient. Such a setup is not, however, conducive to permanent change. In development work, it is good to be critically aware of how the development work is carried out, whose interests are taken into consideration, who is responsible and makes decisions, who are encouraged and how, and what type of development is sought after.

The position of a developer is challenging in equality work. A developer negotiates, is aware of and dismantles power relations, acts as a mirror, allows people peace, trusts and meets people halfway, is invisible and participates, and is involved in changing something that may still be finding its shape or may never be shaped.

Good practice

Understanding development as cooperation between the actors, as an open, critical, experimental and fumbling process towards something new. Development can rarely be confined into something that proceeds chronologically or linearly, nor can it take place in a space devoid of history or context. Instead, development is situation-dependent.

Example

"It's better not to define someone else's experience." Laila (F)

EQUALITY PROMOTION AND CHANGE

“...that, hey, such excellent things took place there, things that you really couldn't anticipate at the planning stage, that they'd be so excellent.” Titta (F)

Even the mere intent of equality promotion effects change. Equality work produces and – when successful – means a comprehensive, wide-reaching and deep change. It cannot be characterised in unambiguous terms as a linear process with a beginning and an end. Change cannot be made on behalf of others, either, as it does not take place automatically and you cannot set its outcome beforehand. We need to have the courage to leave change an open process that involves surprises, and we must allow time for it. In a process of change, an open ending requires courage in a social situation dominated by the market and a strong orientation on managerialism, targets and performance, efficiency and managing and controlling people.

“Even if you wanted to speed it up, you must allow it its time.” Carin (F)

Change is a key phenomenon in equality promotion: what changes and how. Therefore it is interesting to ask what the changes tell us. Equality speaks of change, but change does not necessarily take place quickly or easily. To an extent, this seems to be difficult to understand. Today's business takes place by financial quarter, which results in reluctance to commit to long-term equality work. A multitude of interests meet in work towards a change, and the topmost one is not necessarily always the desire to promote justice and equality. Time needs to be allocated for negotiating about the meanings of equality and gender and pursuit of equality that is not based on competition.

Equality work also needs to involve the consideration of how change on the whole is taken into account in the planning and implementation of activities. If the objectives and outcomes are set firmly at the very beginning, how much room does this leave for change?

Good practice

Accepting change as an open process and also leaving room for surprises in the learning process.

Example

“...that you're not like meddled with, or defined or pressured. (...) it's really like a physical image that if (...) you're told that you have to change, you see, then you're put like (...) in a tight spot. You can't possibly change. But if you're told that you can be whatever you want to be, then you may actually begin to change because you get a bit of space around you.” Merja (F)

When the activities end

EVALUATING THE ACTIVITIES OR WHAT IS IT THAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE?

■ *"What I did learn at least was that when there are times in that kind of project work that all of the fancy targets aren't met so perfectly, then (...) that on one hand you're seriously working towards the targets but, on the other hand, you're not putting the blame, the blame on anyone or you're not creating any extra anxieties for everything not having taken place so perfectly." Sirkka (F)*

The results of an activity are evaluated in relation to the objectives set. This illustrates the aptness of the objectives as much as it illustrates the success achieved in the activities.

A society's equality situation is often evaluated statistically. Employment statistics, pay statistics and gender segregation in education and the labour market are indeed good indicators of equality. In a project, however, it may be difficult to measure the results achieved in taking equality into consideration in figures. Equality promotion may also otherwise produce unforeseen and wide-reaching impacts. At times these are hard to detect, identify or even recognise. The eradication of sexual harassment may improve the working atmosphere, which may result in an increase in work productivity. Some of the effects such as the impact of a grandmother's education on a granddaughter's choices may not be measurable until generations later.

In addition to numerical indicators, other tools should be used in project-specific evaluations, too. When conducting an evaluation, it is good to assess what kind of evaluation is meaningful and useful for the activities and objectives. Therefore it pays to construct the evaluation in a manner that, first and foremost, serves and supports your own activities.

Good practice

Evaluations should be examined as part of wider societal power relations. It is good to carry out evaluations locally and regionally, in cooperation and without creating juxtapositions. Traditional top-down evaluation models should be avoided, and it pays to let go of the idea that you should be able to manage or control everything.

Example

The administrative top-down operating model aims at evaluating, controlling and supervising the activities, whereby the evaluation easily becomes rigid and mechanistic. Neglecting the significance and objectives of the evaluation easily results in resorting to quantitative indicators only, while possibly also ending up producing an image of one "correct" way of action.

Example

In equality projects, the object of evaluation often is the training organised by the project. In an evaluation, training is often positioned as part of a wider framework where those participating in training are administered and measured by, for example, classifying the training activities as either competent or inefficient. Training is evaluated on the basis of indicators

including the extent to which the participants in training produce the managerialistic ideology in practice: motivation, flexibility, self-observation and self-assessment (incl. portfolios, self-assessments, learning diaries).

Evaluations can be developed by becoming aware of and dismantling administered practices. The purpose of an evaluation is not to please the financer or polish your image but to make your own patterns of thought and activities more equal. An evaluation also involves self-assessment, the occasional examination of any changes in one's own patterns of thought and activities.

Example

Used to some extent in projects, action research involves evaluation throughout the process.

Example

Personal diaries kept by each actor may help verify the process and work towards change.

CONTINUITY IN EQUALITY WORK / APPLYING AND DISSEMINATING THE RESULTS

“...but it's a little like that how it, how it could be disseminated an awful lot by itself (...). When a project ends, funding ends, too, and people start doing other stuff, so how can anyone continue it on a voluntary basis.” Sirkka (F)

Efforts should be made at the project planning stage to secure project continuity and the application and dissemination of results.

It is good to apply initiative in communications and use as many channels as possible. Personal media relations should be utilised, and new relations should be created. You should inform about a project before and during the work and about the results after the project has ended. It is also good to organise preferably open meetings and seminars and participate in events organised by others. You should be active in creating cooperation relationships and networks and lobby the project to political decision-makers, too.

“And despite this, there will the occasional setback, and they're always pretty depressing. But then you have to er think again what to do, and what you can learn from this, so that the same thing won't happen again the next time.” Raija (F)

The audiences attracted by equality work are usually rather small, and the headlines it gets in the media are not large, either. It may be comforting to know that the work continues at least in those participating in the project in various forms such as continuation projects or new forms of cooperation. Some of the continuity of the work will remain invisible, and some will not be seen as changes until generations later.

Epilogue

A PERSONAL PROCESS

■ *"It's a personal journey, and there's no way I can see it as any other type of journey. And the view, it sort of develops gradually in the long run." Merja (F)*

Equality work is also a personal process of change for those involved. Its consequences may be surprising. The process may not necessarily always be easy. Uncertainty and one's own incompleteness are a permanent state of affairs. This may pose a challenge to one's expertise and know-how.

The impacts of personal change also extend outside the actual project in the actors' other spheres of life. Evaluating these impacts as part of the project results is difficult if not impossible.

Mervi: "Research as an activity involves you beginning to study something that there is no knowledge of yet. Also in research on desegregation you encounter all sorts of interesting and even frightening things, especially surprises. A researcher is in a position where they discover connections between things, people and events. Through research, you also learn about the limited nature of knowledge. Researchers ponder, propose and question things, and finally share their findings with others. This publication discusses findings from projects towards desegregation and activities promoting equality. Searching for good practices created in equality projects is about continuously considering your own and other people's methods and policies as well as examining the values they convey. Different national and international networks that I have been able to participate in during this project have provided energy and support for equality work. Equality is an educational objective."

Pirkko: "Examining previously implemented equality projects made me more sensitive to the manifestations of inequality. While we were thinking about good practices to combat gender inequality, trafficking in women was increasing, the employment rate of young educated women was going down, boots with pointed toes and stiletto heels once again appeared in shops, and tops and jackets became more figure-hugging. However, equality promotion is – so I want to believe – possible. Tried and tested methods exist – what is needed is political will to introduce them."

Kristiina: "This research has also made me critically re-examine my own previous activities in equality projects and equality work. The observation that equality work does not necessarily always have anything to do with equality is revealing and useful. Is the "blind spot" of equality work actually in your own activities, in your way of thinking and acting? It is easy and perhaps even tempting to start teaching others, to dress up as an expert, but taking equality into consideration in your own activities in fact calls for constant negotiation, which does not necessarily prove easy. How much time is actually left in equality work for working on your own process and sharing the related thoughts and experiences? I felt privileged to experience and share the life-long equality work of seasoned equality workers. These experiences will always be with me, and I know I will not be alone in doing equality work."

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Appendix 1

Equality workers in education and training

The objective of the national thematic work is genuine dialogue on measures with equality workers and researchers as well as the political and administrative sectors. It is through collaboration between all of these that more permanent changes can be created in the field of desegregation that serves the mainstreaming of equality. Presented in the project plan, this description was also the starting point for selecting the interviewers.

The interviews were thematic interviews regarding equality work carried out in Finland over the past thirty years. There was a special focus on projects that the interviewee had personally participated in, along with looking back to the process of getting involved in equality work. The meaning of gender and equality were also discussed on a more general level.

The total number of interviewees who had participated in equality projects in education and training was 24. Seven of these were joint interviews with my colleague Kristiina Brunila. Of these, an interview with one person was conducted in two sessions. Six of our joint interviews took place Helsinki and one in northern Finland. I interviewed sixteen persons on my own. Ten of these were individual interviews and two group interviews. I interviewed four actors involved in equality projects in education and training in Helsinki, eleven in northern Finland and one in central Finland.

The majority of those we interviewed together had participated in projects that had involved the equality dimensions of both education and training as well as working life. The majority of my interviewees have a long history in direct equality issues or issues related to equality. They have acted and some are still acting in the planning, implementation, research, development and administration of equality projects. Those working in equality projects in the field of education and training were or had been teachers at various levels of education as well as worked in educational administration. The majority of the interviewees had a degree in education, psychology or sociology. Some had a degree in engineering or science. They had familiarised themselves with equality issues in different Finnish and international training events, courses and conferences. Their current duties also involve a variety of equality issues.

The interviewees described the everyday life of equality workers, told about measures taken with persons and organisations representing various sectors, the practical aspects of equality promotion as well as the sets of problems related to equality work. They described organisational equality policies, equality measures, methods of and obstacles to mainstreaming equality also on the basis of their own experiences.

Seasoned equality workers and actors in equality projects in working life

The diverse data used in our research consists of interviews with seasoned equality workers and a network of actors in equality projects as well as an extensive survey of equality projects that was carried out at the initial stage of the research process and that is reported on in greater detail under 'Working Life Equality Projects'. In addition to the project survey, the criteria for selecting the interviewees were outlined after an orientation based on literature.

The selection of interviewees was based on and supported by the following five wider and intertwined perspectives on equality work:

Eradicating inequality from gender

Gender perceptions and differences interconnected with gender offer the key perspectives on equality work. In relation to this, we looked for actors who had worked on the mechanisms of discrimination and dismantling them, diversity and pluralism as well as challenging heteronormativity in equality work.

Eradicating inequality from the practices of working life

Critical points of equality work can be found where people meet and interact. Therefore it was important to find actors with experience in negotiating equality in various contexts and sectors and with diverse views on what should be taken into consideration in negotiating work and how this work should be carried out.

Eradicating inequality on the actor level

The issue of agency poses a challenge in equality work. Since many equality projects have concentrated on strengthening women's agency, we decided to address the problematics of agency and femininity and looked for people who had worked on the issue of agency in equality work.

Eradicating inequality from the bases of pay

Work of equal value has been the issue longest on the agenda of equality work, so it was important to map equality work involving negotiations on work of equal value and look for people who have incorporated negotiations on work of equal value in their equality work.

Eradicating inequality from our own ways of thinking and acting

How we come to produce gender and hierarchical gender orders, discriminating practices and marginalisation in our own activities is a critical problem point in equality work. We worked on this in the project and while analysing the data. This perspective also challenged us researchers to enter into a personal process, critically examining our own activities and taking the perspectives we studied into consideration in our own ways of thinking and acting.

In addition, we emphasised the duration of equality work over a period as long as possible, regionality as well as consideration for the various actors and sectors of working life in our selections.

We interviewed a total of twenty seasoned equality workers and actors in equality projects, of whom two equality workers were interviewed twice. Seven of the interviews were carried out jointly by Kristiina Brunila and Mervi Heikkinen. Our interviewees working on equality in working life had been involved in such equality work since the 1970s and 1980s: they had worked in businesses operating in various sectors, municipalities, towns, cities, universities and other higher education institutions, adult education centres, interest groups and public administration. Many of them also had extensive international connections and networks.

The majority of the interviewees had an academic degree in economics, business, law, social sciences, education, engineering or the humanities. Those with upper secondary education represented the fields of business and commerce, crafts and technology. Three interviewees had a doctorate and one a licentiate degree. Around the time of the interviews, the interviewees were acting in duties including trainers, teachers, consultants, researchers, professors, entrepreneurs, managing directors, executive directors, civil servants, personnel developers, project workers and managers as well as students.

The interviewees were invited by e-mail, and all agreed to be interviewed. One person could not be interviewed due to busy schedules. The interviews were theme interviews and took place at the interviewees' workplaces/homes, excluding one interview, which took place at the interviewer's office. The interviews lasted from one to four hours at a time, and they were recorded and transcribed. Before or after their interview, the interviewees also completed a background information form detailing issues including their educational background, position in the work community, national and international experience in equality work, studies in women's studies and a brief description of the equality work they have conducted. The interviews covered the following themes:

- A life-history perspective on the interviewees' own equality work
- The wider historical and social dimensions of equality work
- Participation in equality projects and an examination of the projects





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