

On how to start working with gender in schools

A result of the project

Gender Approach and Education in Primary Schools in Ukraine

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Background

This product is part of the project *Gender Approach and Gender Education in Primary Schools in Ukraine*, a project in cooperation between Women's Folk High School in Gothenburg, Sweden, Women's Consortium of Ukraine and National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Kyiv. The basis of this product was laid at a conference in Kiev October 11-13, 2010. The product is meant to serve as an aid for those who want to work with gender and gender equality in schools, but is by no means a complete product. Based on experiences from the Swedish popular education, we can hopefully provide some ideas and proposals that can function as a support and a basis for local work in Ukraine.

Working with gender and equality

Since gender and equality are issues that mainly deal with attitudes, privileges and power relationships, the work must be based on the situation and the conditions prevailing in each

society. Each place of work must also find its own approach and its own way to deal with these issues.

You can choose to work with gender and gender equality on different levels. If you want your entire workplace to be involved, support from the management, board etc. is of course needed. The leaders' engagement and their attitudes are of great importance when challenging traditional gender roles. In addition, the interest from colleagues, as well as specific resources is a must. A well thought out and long-term plan needs to be done and appropriate methods selected. Then the work can start. In Sweden there is a lot of experience from making gender equality plans, appointing people responsible for equality work and from thinking in statistics and figures. Unfortunately the work often stops at this and a deeper work for change is avoided.

If you are unable to organize your whole

workplace, you can try to work on a smaller scale, such as your own class or group and select methods to get an idea of prevailing attitudes, norms and beliefs and start a discussion.

Obstacles when working with gender equality

Gender is often misunderstood as something that only affects women and is therefore not considered as important as other problems. It may be cultural obstacles that are expressed in the interaction between people and affecting what women and men feel, think and do. It may be institutional barriers that are expressed in structures, procedures and rules. In general, men have more negative attitudes to gender equality than women. Some may think that it is not an issue because it constitutes discrimination against men, others believe that it is a generational subject and not relevant for the young generation. Some believe that the prevailing sexual order is a natural state and that men and women are naturally suited for different tasks.

A gendered world

We live our lives as gendered in a gendered world. Even the things around us are often gendered. One can almost believe that this gendering is according to the laws of Nature. From a look upon gender difference as a natural thing follows a serious concern when people do not follow the pattern - for example when people of the same gender fall in love. But if gender difference was natural, why then are laws banning homosexuality and laws criminalizing women's infidelity needed in some parts of the world? These laws are in fact part of an immense effort to influence people's behaviour. The legislators, parents, priests, teachers, advertisers, retailers, program leaders, etc. continuously express opinions on

what is appropriate gender-based behaviour. This fact makes it difficult to discuss gender and equality. It easily becomes embarrassing, private and difficult to talk about in a general way. This is true even in societies that outwardly appears to have come a long way when it comes to gender equality, e.g. Sweden.

As you probably already know working with gender equality and gender issues is a long process and a long-term work for change. It requires of course special knowledge and much patience. It is important to clarify that the analysis of gender is made on a structural level rather than on an individual one, and also to let the power perspective permeate the approach rather than dealing with descriptions of the essence of nature. Explanations based on structures often include the analysis of women's and men's different gender conditions and the opportunities and limitations they bring.

Structures and conditions in organizations are often tailored to men's life context, which seems to be the norm for the organization of work. To find out that men and women do different things in an organization or to count the number of women and men is not enough to require a power perspective. It is when you look at women's and men's different conditions when taking risks, taking action and raise themselves in an organization that power is seen. In what way have men and women in an organization learnt to help themselves? What happens to people who do this? In what way are men and women rewarded through salaries, better grades, career paths and confirmation, and what are the punishments?

Prerequisites

To make a work on equal opportunity successful at all levels a series of conditions are required. One of these is that the legislative assembly

has a conscious and active interest in achieving equality. The basis for this is the existence of popular support and interest groups that influence and make demands on policy makers, media, etc. It also requires a political will on regional and local levels. To be able to implement this will, knowledge not easily available is needed, knowledge that takes time to acquire e.g. theories of gender and sexuality. This knowledge can be obtained by studies, discussions, reflections and surveys. It also requires well thought-out methods that work in the specific environment. This manual is intended for those who want to work for change at the local level, in a larger or smaller scale.

To start working with gender

The work starts with drawing attention to predominating norms and values. But the first step is to become aware of one's own conception of gender and sex differences, masculinity and femininity, sexuality, norms and divergence. This can be done by asking oneself questions. How do you for example think girls and boys should be and behave? What is the ideal image? What is a girl not supposed to do? What makes a boy a real boy? Why do you think like this? A teacher must in this way become aware of her own ideas about gender and how these affect her teaching.

The one who is going to train teachers should also start with questions about how teachers think in terms of gender, gender differences, norms and deviations, and what the ideal girl and the ideal boy look like and why they have these perceptions.

The next step might be to highlight the notions of gender that exist among colleagues in general at the place of work. This can be done in various ways, through talks, discussions, interviews or surveys. The goal is an increased

awareness of the difference in notions that exist and to create a greater willingness to problematize and develop one's own ideas.

A third step could be to highlight, problematize and develop the students' beliefs and gender myths. Here it is important to use methods that will work for just them and in that particular environment. Which methods to choose can only the teachers themselves decide.

Democracy and human rights

Working with gender and gender equality in schools is ultimately a question of democracy and human rights. The goal for gender equality is based on equal dignity, equal rights and obligations and intends to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on gender. Once you have become aware of how beliefs about gender affect our lives and limit our opportunities, you can not help but constantly ask questions about gender and how these are linked to other power structures that have with class, religion, sexuality, disability and age to do.

Methods to increase understanding and knowledge

Here are some methods that could give an opportunity to get out of the deadlock that many women and feminists in Ukraine believe are prevailing. These methods can be used with different time planning and within different parts of the workplace. It is important to put up intermediate goals for the things that are expected to change. Trying to change the whole work place at once is not successful. Just to have a discussion can be very important. During the conference in Kiev October 2010 it was also stressed that there are no quick fixes, but the work with gender equality and gender is long and slow.

A. Methods to integrate a gender perspective in all activities

The following methods can be used when working for equality at the whole place of work and are used when a place has decided to integrate gender in all activities. Many more methods have been developed, but from consideration of space a limited amount of examples are here given.

Contemporary social and environmental analysis

This is a method often used by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to try to identify which external factors affect the workplace and its development. Questions often asked in such an analysis are: What is going on and how does it affect our / my ability to achieve our / my goals? An activity is compiled which presents various scenarios with hypothetical implications. The decision made is often called strategy. ([Http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omvärldsanalys](http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omvärldsanalys)).

There is no special method for contemporary social and environmental analysis, but a

method often used is the SWOT method. You collect the organization's weaknesses, threats, strengths and opportunities in a model like this: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SWOT_en.svg?uselang=sv. The idea is not just to have a strategic vision for how the organization should be strengthened, but also how to take the next step and try to switch the positions of the various aspects. Only then the method is fully effective.

Gender and Diversity / Intersectionality

A better understanding of concepts such as intersectionality, which takes into account the different grounds of discrimination such as class, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity and transgender identity or expressions, can be helpful in the analysis of a workplace. One can ask the following questions:

- Does age play an important role in how a job is paid?
- Are women with disabilities included in the group "women" when a target is described?
- Are any ethnic groups treated differently only because of their ethnicity?
- When sexual rights are discussed, are transgender persons, gay or bisexual men and women included?
- Is there room for discussion on what impact class has when considering which questions are important?

Checklist for participation and influence

Ask the following questions to the people at the workplace

Interpretative prerogative

- Which actors set the agenda and make the general assumptions?
- Who identifies problems?
- Who identifies needs and interests?
- Who are considered key actors / stakeholders?
- Which individuals / groups within the organization may take part in strategic decisions?
- Who perform the work in the project?
- What are the roles of men respectively

women?

Influence

In what forms can influence be exerted?

Who participates in the implementation and monitoring?

Who participates in the evaluation of the results?

Is anything specific done to facilitate women's participation in decision-making processes?

Sidetrack or mainstream

Which problem and need areas are assessed as problems for all?

What are the status of equal gender issues and gender perspectives within the organization?

Analyze and problematize any opposition to the discussion on gender and gender equality.

3R or 4R method

This is a method used a lot in Sweden since the late 1990s. The three R's stand for Representation, Resources and Realia. The first two R's is about establishing facts in the form of statistics. The third "R" is about understanding the facts established and try to set goals and find ways to do something about any shortcomings that have become apparent.

Representation

This will provide answers to what the gender division is like at different levels of the organization, boards, staff groups, student council, etc.

Resources

This will provide answers to how the allocation of resources between men and women look like. One can examine how much time is provided for men and women to speak at meetings and in classrooms. How are costs within the organization distributed?

Realia

This will give answers to why the representation and resources examined look the way they do. Do men and women get as much space and as much resources? If this is not the case what you can do about it? You often come to the conclusion that it is unconscious norms and values that guide. Therefore it is important to take time for discussion and education, before setting any new goals for change.

To realize: the fourth "R"

This is about to realize new goals and measures on the basis of the findings.

B. Methods for working with gender and equality in parts of the organization

The following are examples of methods that can be used in parts of the organization. Some of them were practiced during the October conference.

Observations

Observations can be made in both a quantitative and a qualitative way. In both cases it is about trying to see, to put on gender glasses and to examine what we take for granted, natural and normal.

Quantitative observation is to count things in time or space. It can also be about what different people do or say.

Example

You are supposed to observe what different participants or colleagues choose to do during a shared activity. You write down your observations and note how the activities are distributed between men and women, i.e. what they choose to do. Then, you analyze your observation: What does the result tell you? How can you understand it? Replace the genders and see how you then think. Does it seem to be

equal? Discuss with your colleagues how they see it. What do you need in time, knowledge and other resources to be able to make a change?

Qualitative observation is to spot patterns or norms. It's about getting hold of what we take for granted in terms of expectations for women and men and sexuality.

Imagine that you are visiting your own country and are curious about how people are talking to each other, and how they organize various activities. What do you see? Decide before you make the observation what you want to focus on, one or more things:

- How men and women act
- How men and women talk to each other
- What men's and women's body language look like
- Determine a specific location, such as a staff meeting, a lesson or a dining room
- Determine how long time the observation is supposed to take. Do not decide more than half an hour

Decide how to observe: By taking notes, filming or otherwise. It is important that you yourself are not active in the activity itself.

If you are going to write you can make a file with three columns. There you write headlines like: Who does what? Who says what? Add comments.

After the observation you try to analyze what you have seen and what patterns you can see. If you change gender on the persons it might become clearer. Think about the importance of people's behaviour from a power perspective.

Pedagogic observation

You do as in a qualitative observation, but during a lesson, a student council meeting, a game or something else. Next time you see the group show your observation and ask how

they think. Also show the version where you changed gender. Pedagogic observations can be made at different times.

Consider in both cases what space women respectively men get in the situation observed. Do you yourself have concepts you would like to change? Should you as a teacher have acted differently?

Evaluation exercises

The following methods can be used in the personnel group or with students. Some methods aim to raise awareness and create discussion on gender, sexuality and gender equality. Other methods are tools to improve equality in groups.

Four corners

In this exercise, participants are supposed to consider how to react to different statements. Examples of statements can be taken from the organization or workplace itself. Four corners in the room are marked out where each corner represents one alternative. One corner must always be an open corner for those who cannot choose any of the other options.

Prepare yourself by determining which statements to choose.

Read the statements and tell the participants what the different corners stand for. Ask participants to choose a corner and ask them to move to that corner.

When everybody has chosen a corner, ask him or her to discuss with those who are in the same corner. How did they think when choosing?

It is essential that participants don't comment on each other's motivation for the choice and give evaluations. It is allowed to change corner when you have heard the others' motivations.

Example of statements

- Church norms are true / can be doubted / are completely untrue / neither - nor
- Gender is a social construction /is inherited / is both / neither-nor
- Boys and girls have different ways of learning: Agree / Disagree / Depends / Can not take a position

After the exercise, it is important to discuss how the participants felt when doing it, why the exercise was done and how norms and attitudes affect us.

The line

In this evaluation exercise the participants are expected to decide what they think about various statements.

Start with drawing a visible line on the floor in the room. One end of the line means: It is entirely true, and the other end means: It is not true at all. When you have said your statement the participants are supposed to place themselves on the line according to what they think, at one end of the line, close to the end or closer to the middle. It is not allowed to place yourself in the very middle of the line. When all participants have taken a position ask them to discuss in small groups how they thought. Then ask those who want to tell the group why they put themselves where they are.

It is important that the participants do not evaluate each other's choices, but just ask for their reasons. It is allowed to change places after you have discussed.

Examples of statements

- Church norms are very influential in Ukraine
- Ukraine is a society that protects the rights of homosexuals
- Women and men are treated equally according to their ability
- Women and men have different conditions,

which are inherited

- Gender is a social construction

Background knowledge that can be useful in the work

Knowledge of Swedish popular education

Increased knowledge of the Swedish popular movements, which includes lifelong learning, is an example that can inspire. One method used is the study circle method, which means studies in small groups where you work together and help each other. The same tradition is not to be found in Ukraine. During the conference, and in the subsequent round table discussion, many of the Ukrainian participants thought that Swedish adult education method is a way forward to create support groups among the various organizations. In this way one can for example think beyond the established power structures and instead forge alliances between each other.

Useful concepts

Biologism Use of biological principles when explaining human especially social behaviour. Trying to deduce human behaviour and social phenomena from biological evidence. Biologism is often used as an insult, for people who have an over-reliance on biology, the biological sexes and / or significance of hereditary factors.

Bisexuality A sexual behaviour or an orientation involving physical and/or romantic attraction to both males and females

Discrimination That a person is treated less favourably than another person in a comparable situation.

Drag King A woman who dresses as a man, often to perform in public.

Drag Queen A man who dresses as a woman, often to perform in public.

Feminism There are several different kinds of feminisms: liberal feminism, radical feminism, post-structuralist feminism, queer feminism, etc. The researcher Jane Freedman says that common for all feminisms is: “attention to women’s subordinate position in society and the discrimination women face because of their gender. [...] And that all feminists require changes in the social, economic, political and cultural order to combat and eventually eliminate this discrimination against women “.

Feminist A person who thinks that women are subordinate to men and who wants to change that.

Gender Cultural beliefs about men and women and male and female connected to power. Gender is something we all do.

Gender Order / Structure A power structure / structure that separates men and women where women are valued less than male, and men constitute the norm.

LGBT An abbreviation for: lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Heteronormativity With heteronormativity means that heterosexuality is considered normal, given, expected and a preferred way of living. A heteronormative way of thinking assumes that everyone is heterosexual. This makes different sexuality than heterosexual regarded as abnormal and weird / deviant. There are also clear links to the gender power structure / gender structure system and the adoption of men’s and women’s inequality in which there are rules and standards for how these two categories should behave. When heterosexuality is made the norm in schools, it means that the way you speak and act on gender and sexuality makes gay and bisexual marginalized or invisible. The norm also manifests itself through social institutions such as marriage, which in many countries so far only is allowed for heterosexual couples.

Heterosexuality Ability to fall in love and / or be sexually attracted to persons of “opposite” sex.

Homosexuality Ability to fall in love and / or be sexually attracted to persons of the same sex as yourself.

Homophobia A range of negative attitudes and feelings towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and in some cases transgendered and intersex people. Definitions refer variably to antipathy, contempt, prejudice, aversion, and irrational fear. Homophobia is observable in critical and hostile behaviour such as discrimination

and violence on the basis of perceived non-heterosexual orientation.

Equality A goal - a state where women and men have equal power to shape society and their lives.

Gender The different roles that men and women are forced/fitted in based on different expectations for women and men.

Gender power structures Power structures in which men have more power than women and thus are superior to women.

Inequality When men and women do not have equal power to shape society and their own lives.

Patriarchy A social system in which the role of the male as the primary authority figure is central to social organization, and where fathers hold authority over women, children, and property. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege, and is dependent on female subordination.

Historically, the principle of patriarchy has had a deep influence on modern civilization. Most forms of feminism characterize patriarchy as an unjust social system that is oppressive to women. In feminist theory the concept of patriarchy often includes all the social mechanisms that reproduce and exert male dominance over women.

Queer Theory A field of critical theory that emerged in the early 1990's. A combination of theories that primarily focus on and problematize heterosexuality as the norm.

Transgender Is a general term applied to a variety of individuals, behaviours, and groups involving tendencies to vary from conventional

gender roles. Transgender is the state of one's gender identity (self-identification as woman, man, neither or both) not matching one's "assigned sex". "Transgender" does not imply any specific form of sexual orientation. Transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual or asexual. Some may consider conventional sexual orientation labels inadequate or inapplicable to them. The precise definition for transgender remains in flux, but includes:

- Of, relating to, or designating a person whose identity does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender roles, but combines or moves between these.
- People who were assigned a sex, usually at birth and based on their genitals, but who feel that this is a false or incomplete description of themselves.
- Non-identification with, or non-presentation as, the sex (and assumed gender) one was assigned at birth.

A transgender individual may have characteristics that are normally associated with a particular gender, identify elsewhere on the traditional gender continuum, or exist outside of it as "other", "agender", "Genderqueer", or "third gender". Transgender people may also identify as bigender, or along several places on either the traditional transgender continuum, or the more encompassing continuums, which have been developed in response to the significantly more detailed studies done in recent years.¹

Transgender persons define themselves rarely so, but usually that individuals may prefer to imply that they are just men, women, neutralize, or various combinations thereof. They define themselves perhaps as transsexuals, transvestites, transgender lard, drag queens, drag-Kings, or whatever. Transgender is an umbrella term that came primarily to be a

unifying term in the sexual-political issues and not to exclude anyone who could benefit from adoption of trans-friendly policies.

Transsexual An individual's identification with a gender inconsistent or not culturally associated with his/her biological sex. A medical diagnosis can be made if a person experiences discomfort as a result of a desire to be a member of the opposite sex or if a person experiences impaired functioning or distress as a result of that gender identification. Discrimination and negative attitudes towards transsexualism often accompany certain religious beliefs or cultural values. There are cultures that have no difficulty integrating people who change gender roles, often holding them with high regard.

Useful links

www.wcu-network.org.ua/

www.gendermap.org.ua/

kvinnofolkhogskolan.se/

www.wikigender.org/index.php/Gender_Equality_in_Ukraine

viewpoint-east.org/

