

ACTION ORIENTED GENDER RESEARCH

A merger between gender research
and action research

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- 2003-2005 Pilot financed by and conducted at Vinnova (Swedish agency for innovation system) Realized the central role of middle managers and the importance of process leading
- 2005-2007 The gender network. This was a network of middle managers coming from different organizations. Process leading. Using gender theory to systematize the knowledge and change process.
Developing the approach Action oriented gender research
- 2008-2010 Three organizations. Three network of middle managers. Process leading.
- 2010-2013 Project at Stockholm University .
Gender aware managers a condition for a gender aware university.



- Today there is extensive research on how gender is constructed in organizations. Research showing that gender is intertwined within the ongoing organizational life and, therefore, has a significant impact on organizations.
- Despite the extensive research available on gender, this knowledge has not yet been applied and used in the same amount in development work in organizations (Meyerson & Colb 2000).



Doing gender

- Every day, in a myriad of settings we do gender in relation to each other (West & Zimmerman 1987).
- The doing of gender takes place simultaneously as the organisation itself finds its form. (Acker 1992)
- Gender is therefore a constraining structure in organisations.
- Gender awareness is necessary in an organisation that wants to be able to develop and be innovative.



The unreflected doing of gender

- The paradoxical part of doing gender is that people in organisations do gender with precision but this is not something that they usually are aware and upon which they reflect.
- From a feminist point of view uncovering how gender is done in organizations is an important first step of the research and development work.



Uncover the gender order

To be able to create gender aware organisations it is necessary to address and challenge the taken-for-granted, the so called natural order, which appear to be gender neutral yet maintains a gender order in which men and certain forms of masculinity ideal predominate.

But how to uncover the taken-for-granted norms and ideals?



Action research

- Within action research there has been a long tradition working with uncovering and changing what is perceived as taken-for-granted.
 - Action research can offer feminist gender research a greater understanding of the variety of intervention and group process techniques.
 - Reflection on action is important to be able to see what is taken for granted.
 - Facilitate the processes leading to transformative learning and new innovative actions.
- (Argyris & Schön 1974; Brockbank & McGill 2007).



Importance of organizing learning and change processes

- Theories on gender do not automatically make people in organizations want to work with processes of change. The change processes needs to be organized.
- Process leading is acquired:
- Forming a network group for reflection and joint learning. Reflection on everyday organizational life.
 - Using activating process methods, that is methods promoting reflection and learning.
 - Co-research, that could be performed in different constellations.



Gender-aware organizations

- The focus of our projects has been to study how middle managers do gender and how it can be changed from that position.
- Formed networks of middle managers. Organized learning processes in groups and co-research. Facilitating reflection on action for transformative learning and new innovative actions.



Middle managers with power

- For people with formal organizational power, like middle managers, it is imperative to reflect on what kind of conditions their actions generate for co-workers.
- Andersson et. al (2003) maintain that a manager who wants to create equal opportunities for her or his staff needs to be gender aware. If this is lacking, there is a risk that the manager will create more restrictive conditions for development and carrier for women than for men. Gender awareness is needed.

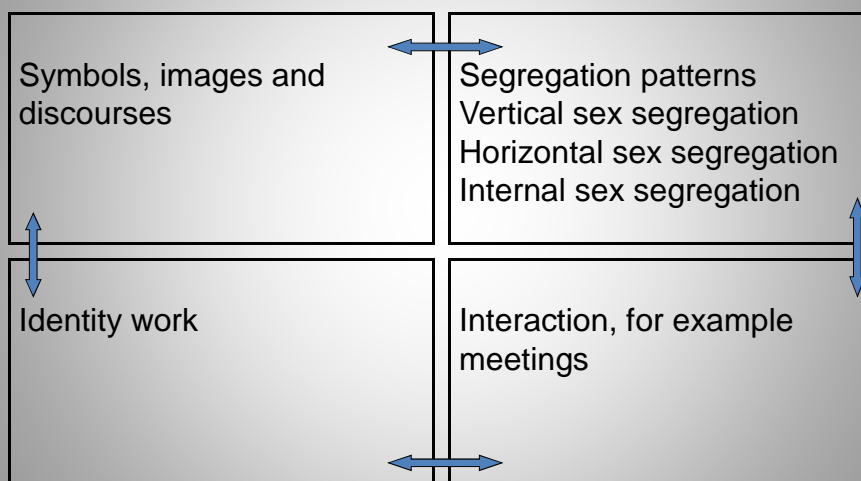


Middle managers as change agents

- With an awareness of how the middle managers do gender they can start to act in new ways.
- Middle managers can create more equal conditions for women and men.
- Strategic power, economic power and the power of distribution.



Ackers' four processes



**GENDER AWARE MANAGERS A CONDITION
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GENDER AWARE UNIVERSITY**

Network of 15 managers, from different institutions and faculties. Humanities, social science, technology and juridical. Also from the library and HR unit.

- It is a pilot project with a research and development design with the aim of creating gender aware managers.
- Support of the vice chancellor.
- The network will meet during period of 18 month, six times per year.
- Co-research is practiced. i.e. where the managers study there own workplaces. This is an important part of the learning and knowledge process.
- Cooperation with the HR department at Stockholm University. Knowledge from the project will be integrated in the ordinary leadership programs here at Stockholm University.

- Gender is a constraining structure in organisations.
- Gender awareness is necessary in organisations that wants to be able to develop and be innovative.
- To work with quotas is important but not enough. It also is important to work with norms and ideals that are taken for granted.
- Action oriented gender research can be a useful model.

Thank you!

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