



WORKING PAPER SERIES

1. A THEORY OF CHANGE FOR TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY
2. FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY
3. QUALITY IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY



INTRODUCTION



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This paper was prepared by Dr. Lucy Ferguson as commissioned by the UN Women Training Centre. The UN Women Training Centre recognizes the good work and expertise of Dr. Ferguson. The paper is considered as a working document which can be further strengthened. It serves to facilitate discussions and generate reflections on training for gender equality. As a working paper, it will continue to evolve for the gender training knowledge and practices continue to evolve.

Background

The UN Women Training Centre is committed to becoming the leading UN centre that contributes, through training for gender equality, to building a society that respects and promotes human rights for all women and men. It is dedicated to supporting the UN and other stakeholders to realise commitments to gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights through transformative training and learning. The Training Centre defines training for gender equality as:

A transformative process that aims to provide knowledge, techniques and tools to develop skills and changes in attitudes and behaviours. It is a continuous and long-term process that requires political will and commitment of all parties in order to create an inclusive, aware and competent society to promote gender equality.¹

The work of the Training Centre is guided by a number of key principles²:

- 1. Human rights for all** – our trainings, from needs assessment to evaluation, seek to contribute to the promotion of human rights.
- 2. Personal transformation as part of social transformation** – for gender equality and women's empowerment to become a reality, we believe both individual and social transformation are vital.
- 3. Participatory, non-hierarchical, and power sharing learning** – the Training Centre believes that learning occurs in a spirit of equal and egalitarian participation, where all learners are teachers and all teachers are learners.
- 4. Inclusiveness and respect for diversity** – throughout all of our work, we promote and celebrate diversity of knowledge, positive practices, and identities.
- 5. Innovation and creativity** – the Training Centre considers that through innovative and creative approaches to training, learning objectives can be achieved more effectively and efficiently.

In order to meet its overarching remit and guiding principles, the Training Centre is committed to producing **evidence-based, practice-informed research** on pertinent topics for the field of training for gender equality. In 2015, the Training Centre published *Training for Gender Equality: Twenty Years On*³, which offers a preliminary review of how training for gender equality has evolved from the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 to the present day. The paper represents a first step in mapping training for gender equality and identifying gaps in knowledge so as to advance understand and contribute to developing strategies for moving forward in this field. This was followed in 2016 by the *Compendium*

¹ UN Women Training Centre (2015) *About Us: UN Women Training Centre*. Available: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/page/view.php?id=45>

² UN Women Training Centre (2016) *UN Women Training Centre Annual Report 2015*. Prepared by E. Wretblad and R. Leghari. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.

³ UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Training for Gender Equality: Twenty Years On*. Prepared by L. Ferguson. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.

of *Good Practices on Training for Gender Equality*⁴, a compilation of 10 exemplary cases from around the globe, designed to make both an empirical and analytical contribution geared towards maximising the transformative potential of training for gender equality. Also in 2016, the Training Centre published its *Typology of Training for Gender Equality*⁵, which offers a classification of “types” of training to support commissioners to plan, develop, design, deliver and evaluate training-related activities more strategically and realistically. The working paper also seeks to contribute to the standardisation of terminology around training for gender equality.

Building on these publications, the Training Centre has recently produced three Working Papers – on Theory of Change, Feminist Pedagogies and Quality. At their meeting in August 2015, the Expert Group on Training for Gender Equality issued a Joint Statement highlighting these issues as priority topics. Specifically, they concluded that:

- A theory of change on training for gender equality should be embedded within a vision of a broader change project.
- Feminist pedagogical practices need to be developed and documented reflexively and collectively, using action-research-action methodologies which engage practitioners from a range of backgrounds, especially in online contexts.
- Strengthening quality assurance measures and developing guidelines on training for gender equality [are necessary, specifically by] continuing to engage with ongoing work on evidence and theory-based practices.⁶

The papers on Theory of Change, Feminist Pedagogies and Quality can be read together or individually. Their aim is to inform Training Centre practice, as well as to promote debate and exchange among key stakeholders and practitioners in the field of training for gender equality.

In this introductory paper, we briefly explore the key contributions of each paper, before tying these together and demonstrating how they interact as key elements of the process of training for gender equality. The Conclusions highlight how both a Theory of Change approach and feminist pedagogical principles and practices can be seen as **building blocks for developing high quality training for gender equality**. Some common threads and themes between the three papers are also identified, such as: core principles; the importance of the Training Cycle; and a flexible and context-specific approach. The paper closes with some remarks on the importance of developing a dissemination strategy for the Working Papers, and proposes some principles for guiding such a strategy.

Key contributions of the Working Papers

⁴ UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Compendium of Good Practices on Training for Gender Equality*. Prepared by L. Ferguson, R. Leghari and E. Wretblad. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.

⁵ UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Typology of Training for Gender Equality*. Prepared by R. Leghari and E. Wretblad. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.

⁶ UN Women Training Centre (2015) Joint Statement from the Expert Group Meeting on Training for Gender Equality. Available: http://gtcop.unwomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=459%3Adeclaracion-conjunta-grupo-de-expertos-de-capacitacion-para-la-igualdad-de-genero-&catid=1%3Anoticias&Itemid=36&lang=en

A common normative thread runs through the papers, involving a commitment to training for gender equality as a transformative practice; a **feminist critique** (which challenges the basis of all knowledge and ways of knowing); and a **feminist project** (which aims to transform oppressive and interlocking power relations in pursuit of a world characterised by increased social justice).⁷

Methodologically, the papers followed the same approach:

- Identify key questions for exploring the topic;
- Contextualise the issues in broader debates from practice and academic research in the field;
- Analyse what specific challenges arise in the case of training for gender equality;
- Explore how this can be applied in practice through a focus on all stages of the Training Cycle; and
- Develop a Statement to elaborate a Training Centre position on this topic for dissemination and debate across the field.

A Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

The objective of this paper is to **develop some core principles for theories of change in training for gender equality, and sketch a proposal for what such a Theory of Change might look like**. In order to do this, four key areas are addressed:

- Understanding change from a feminist perspective
- Lessons from practice about Theory of Change approaches
- Guidelines for a developing a Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality
- A proposed Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

The paper draws extensively on an earlier paper on Theory of Change for training for gender equality by Myra Marx Ferree. This is complemented by further research from a number of fields such as behavioural studies, feminist institutionalism and gender mainstreaming. While there is very little material on Theory of Change in training for gender equality, the paper reviews the key lessons learned from the application of such a methodology in UN Women and other UN agencies.

“A Theory of Change should be considered as both process - the process of working out the theory, mainly in group sessions of practitioners and stakeholders led by a capable facilitator - *and* product - a document of the change model showing how and why a goal will be reached.⁸ Both aspects are equally important, especially in the context of training for gender equality”.

Bringing together these insights, a number of **principles** and a **methodology** for developing a Theory of Change for training for gender equality are elaborated. One of the key arguments reiterated through the paper is that it is **not possible to create a singular, overarching Theory of Change for training for**

⁷ Manicom, A. (1992) Feminist Pedagogy: Transformations, Standpoints, and Politics", *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17(3), p. 366-367. Available: <http://www.csse-scee.ca/CJE/Articles/FullText/CJE17-3/CJE17-3-07Manicom.pdf>

⁸ Taplin, D. H., Clark, H., Collins, E. and Colby, D. C. (2013) *Theory of Change Technical Papers: A Series of Papers to Support Development of Theories of Change Based on Practice in the Field*. New York: ActKnowledge, p.2, Available: http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/ToC-Tech-Papers.pdf

gender equality. This is a process that needs to be conducted in different contexts, adhering to the principles for developing a Theory of Change outlined below:

- Participation – Involve as broad a range of actors as possible
- Critical thinking – Honest, in-depth reflection on power dynamics, risks and constraints
- Context – Keep training relevant to the specific training and institution, draw as much as possible on institutional knowledge
- Reflexivity and responsiveness – Ability to review at period intervals, dynamic document that can be used to test hypotheses and assumptions about change
- Ongoing learning – Willingness to share findings with the broader community of training for gender equality practitioners, commissioners and researchers.

Following this, the paper constructs a proposed theory of change for training for gender equality, which is depicted graphically in line with good practice in Theory of Change methodologies (see Figure 6 in the Theory of Change paper). This is accompanied by an overarching change narrative, elaborating how the different elements of the Theory of Change work together to create pathways to change, and the key assumptions on which the Theory of Change is premised.

The Theory of Change proposed in this paper maps out how different aspects and processes of training for gender equality support the impact of training in achieving the long-term goals and broader vision of transformation. It serves to demonstrate the ongoing value of training for gender equality, whilst at the same time advocating for adequate funding and resources, as well as political will at the highest level.

The paper develops a strong argument for systematically incorporating a Theory of Change approach into the course development process, and proposes how this could be integrated into the Training Cycle, as discussed in more detail in the Conclusions.

Feminist Pedagogies in Training for Gender Equality

This paper explores how feminist pedagogical principles – in line with the UN Women Training Centre's commitment to '**participatory, non-hierarchical, and power-sharing learning**' – can guide the theory and practice of training for gender equality. The paper identifies four key principles which characterise feminist pedagogies, which work together towards an overarching goal of transforming patriarchal structures and oppression, which is at the core of all feminist pedagogical work:

- Participatory learning;
- Validation of personal experience;
- Encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability; and
- Development of critical thinking and open-mindedness.

(Adapted from Hoffman F. L. and Stake, J. E. (2001) "Feminist Pedagogy in Theory and Practice: An Empirical Investigation", *National Women's Studies Association Journal (NWSA)* , 19, pp. 80).

Using these principles as an analytical framework, the paper addresses two key questions. First, how do the key principles of feminist pedagogies apply to training for gender equality? A number of specific challenges are identified for each principle that are relevant to the practice of training for gender equality and may not necessarily apply in the field of feminist adult education (see the short paper on Training and Education for Training for Gender Equality for a more in-depth discussion). Key issues to highlight include, among others:

- The extent to which training scenarios (be they in person, self-paced or moderated) can be called 'feminist classrooms';
- The challenges of when participants' 'personal experience' comes into tension with feminist ideas about gender inequality, patriarchy and subordination;
- The need for strategies for negotiating institutional resistances to change, in order to foster spaces in which participants can apply their new knowledge in practice, towards the transformation of gendered power relations within their organisations; and
- Resisting the impetus to over-simplify and depoliticise gender issues and analysis in order to meet a specific set of learning requirements.

Following this discussion, the paper asks how feminist pedagogical principles can be integrated into the Training Cycle, and sets out a number of practical steps for each stage:

- In **Analysis and Planning**, those establishing the parameters of the training need to apply a flexible approach, whilst maintaining an over-arching commitment to a feminist project of transformative social change.
- For the **Design and Development** phase, it is necessary to strike a balance between acknowledging challenges and striving for transformative learning experiences which promote critical thinking among training participants.
- In terms of **Implementation**, trainers should maximise the potential of the training scenario to integrate feminist pedagogical principles, even when there are limitations and challenges to this.
- Finally, for **Evaluation**, integrating feminist pedagogical principles entails building the four key pedagogical principles explicitly into the design and implementation of evaluation strategies.

One of the key arguments of the paper is that if feminist pedagogical principles are integrated through all stages of the Training Cycle, from analysis to evaluation, then the power dynamics and politics of each stage may be effectively addressed, in order to maximise the potential for training for gender equality to contribute to transformative change.

Quality in Training for Gender Equality

The **objective of this paper** is to explore the key elements of quality in training for gender equality and to propose some criteria, mechanisms and guiding principles for broader debate among stakeholders in the field. The purpose is not to drive a process of quality criteria and assurance mechanisms, but rather to explore what key elements these might include. This paper compares and contrasts the UN Women Training Centre's work on quality with other contemporary initiatives in the field, following the following structure:

- Why quality matters in training for gender equality
- Identifying quality in training for gender equality (Criteria)
- Assuring quality in training for gender equality (Mechanisms)
- Driving quality processes in training for gender equality

The first section contextualises the more pragmatic focus of the paper within broader, ongoing debates on quality in the literature. This is useful for ensuring that the process of developing quality criteria and quality assurance mechanisms is situated within contemporary critical debates, and that any such process is able to speak to these broader ethical and political concerns. Next, the paper goes on to explore three approaches to quality criteria from across the field, before identifying a number of overarching quality criteria:

- ✓ Training for gender equality is part of a feminist political project of transformation of unequal gendered power relations
- ✓ Respect for professional ethics for feminist knowledge transfer
- ✓ Training is embedded training in broader change project
- ✓ Recognition of complexities in practice
- ✓ Adherence to feminist pedagogical principles and practices
- ✓ Intersectional analysis and approach

In order to embed quality *criteria* in the practice of training for gender equality, the paper argues, it is necessary to develop a number of *mechanisms*. The Training Cycle is used as a guide for this, as it reminds us of the cyclical nature of training and ensures a focus on process as well as outcomes. A number of cross-cutting mechanisms are proposed:

- **Participatory feasibility assessment and learning needs assessment** (Analysis and Planning)
- **Theory of Change approach** (Analysis and Planning, Evaluation)
- **Feminist pedagogical practices** (Design and Development, Implementation)
- **Feminist/gender-transformative evaluation methods** (Design and Development, Evaluation)
- **Peer review and reflexivity** (Design and Development, Implementation, Evaluation)

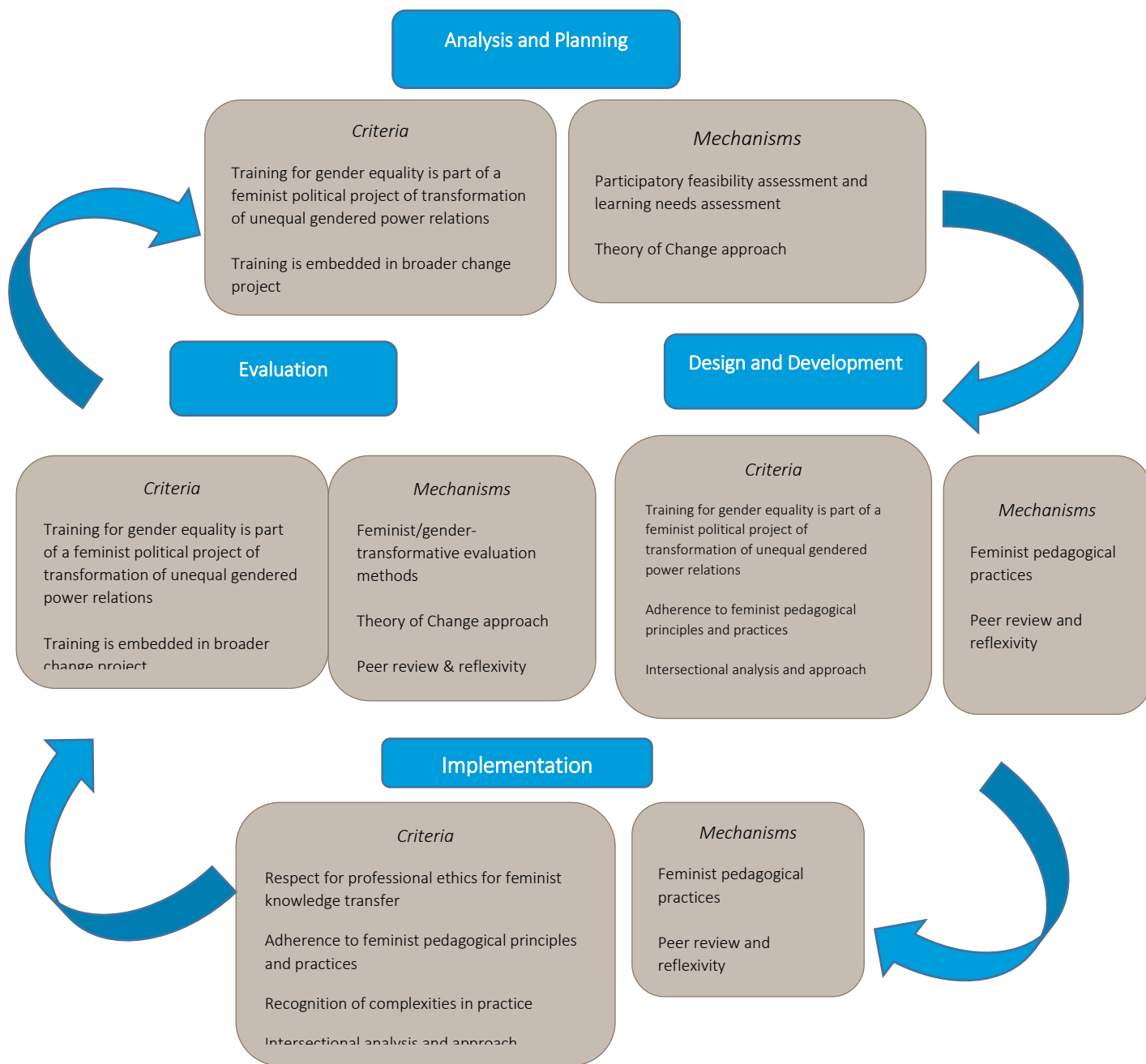
Following this discussion, the paper then turns to reflect on some of the challenges of developing such processes for the field, and proposes a number of recommendations for any future process of developing quality guidelines and mechanisms in training for gender equality. The ways in which different aspects of quality criteria and mechanisms can be embedded within different stages of the Training Cycle is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Conclusions: Theory of Change, Pedagogies and Quality as Key Elements of Training for Gender Equality

Theory of Change, Feminist Pedagogies and Quality can be considered some of the core components for supporting training for gender equality to deliver transformative change.

In particular, as highlighted in Figure 1 below, a Theory of change approach and feminist pedagogies can be seen as building blocks for developing high quality training for gender equality.

Figure 1 – Theory of change and feminist pedagogies as building blocks for quality training for gender equality



Some common threads and themes can be identified between the three papers, which merit discussion here in order to better understand how these aspects of training for gender equality processes fit together – **core principles**; the importance of the **Training Cycle**; and a flexible and **context-specific** approach.

Core Principles

First, each paper develops a **core set of principles** for approaching the topic, as set out in Table 1*. These proposed principles are underscored by the overall guiding principles of the UN Women Training Centre, also shown in the Table.

Table 1: Core Principles for Different Aspects of Training for Gender Equality

	Theory of Change	Pedagogies	Quality	Training Centre
Principles	Participation	Participatory learning	Part of a feminist political project	Human rights-based approach
	Critical thinking	Validation of personal experience	Professional ethics	Personal transformation as a part of social transformation
	Focus on context	Encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability;	Embedded in broader change project	Participatory, non-hierarchical, and power-sharing learning
	Reflexivity and responsiveness	Development of critical thinking and open-mindedness	Recognition of complexities in practice	Inclusiveness and respect for diversity
	Ongoing learning		Feminist pedagogical principles and practices Intersectional approach	Innovation and creativity

This Table demonstrates that there is considerable overlap between the principles guiding each aspect, as well as those which inform the work of the UN Women Training Centre. Based on the findings of these working papers, it is recommended that the UN Women Training Centre harmonises and synthesizes its principles with the core principles of different areas of training for gender equality.

The importance of the Training Cycle

Second, all three papers share a strong commitment to **the importance of the Training Cycle**. For example, as argued in the Pedagogies paper:

“The entire training cycle – from analysis stage through to the planning, design, development, implementation and evaluation – must be guided by feminist pedagogies. Every step in the training process is inherently political. To realise the feminist goal of transforming gender inequalities, it is essential to approach the power dynamics and politics of each stage with a view to upholding feminist pedagogies across this cycle. Thus, the application of feminist pedagogies to the delivery and implementation of training cannot be feminist unless all other stages in the training cycle are also guided by these feminist pedagogical principles.”

In the Theory of Change paper, recommendations are proposed for integrating this approach more systematically into the Training Cycle. The pedagogies paper offers a ‘Checklist’ for applying feminist pedagogical principles and practices in the Training Cycle. More substantively, the Quality paper develops a diagram representing how the different Quality Criteria and Quality Assurance Mechanisms interact with the different stages of the Training Cycle (see Figure 1, above).

The common aim across all three papers is to demonstrate that **training for gender equality is an ongoing, cyclical process which does not follow a straightforward linear trajectory**. These kinds of insights are useful for demonstrating the impact of training for gender equality, and setting out in a concrete manner how exactly training can contribute to transformation.

A flexible and context-specific approach

A third thematic thread running through the papers is an appreciation of the diverse and context-specific nature of training for gender equality. As set out in the Typology, a wide range of practices can be considered within the remit of training for gender equality, which may be broadly categorised into five “types” of training: awareness-raising and consciousness-building; knowledge enhancement; skills training; change in attitudes, behaviours and practices; and mobilisation for social transformation. As such, the approach to Theory of Change, Feminist Pedagogies and Quality developed in the papers can be considered something of an ideal and overarching “type”. Working within a range of political, institutional and budgetary constraints – to name a few – can limit the ability for certain aspects to be applied. As highlighted in the Pedagogies paper,

“The UN Women Training Centre recognises the broad range of initiatives and activities that fall under the remit of training for gender equality. It may be easier to integrate feminist pedagogical principles and practices in certain training contexts, and more challenging in others.”

These questions are particularly pertinent in relation to Quality Criteria and Quality Assurance Mechanisms. As such, a flexible approach to applying the principles and practices proposed in these papers is necessary, depending on the specific circumstances of each training scenario. Nevertheless, these building blocks of training for gender equality can be used as tools for working towards transformative change. Moreover, they can support practitioners to find practical strategies for dealing with the resistances and power dynamics that are an inevitable component of any feminist political project. By bolstering training for gender equality to negotiate resistances and power dynamics; respond to specific contexts; and uphold the transformative aims of training for gender equality, these

proposed principles and practices offer a strong starting point from which to advance inclusive, lasting change.

Steps to be made to advance the field of training for gender equality should:

- Adopt an intersectional approach
- Promote the decolonisation of knowledge on gender
- Pay attention to inequalities that already exist within the field of training for gender equality
- Develop a process that is encouraging and supportive of bringing new actors into the field

In summary, it is hoped that these Working Papers can contribute to advancing practice-informed knowledge on training for gender equality, and spark renewed debate on key priorities in this sphere, with the overall aim of contributing to transformative change.

