

WORKING PAPER

# FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY



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UN WOMEN TRAINING CENTRE

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**UN WOMEN TRAINING CENTRE**  
Santo Domingo, September 2019



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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.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN Women Training Centre is committed to ‘**participatory, non-hierarchical, and power-sharing learning**’ throughout its work.<sup>1</sup> This paper explores how feminist pedagogical principles can guide the theory and practice of training for gender equality. This is a valuable exercise for the field of training for gender equality, as more work is needed on methodological and epistemological approaches, as well as understanding how differences in privilege affect the learning process.<sup>2</sup> There is a need to further distinguish in training for gender equality between *what is being taught* and *how it is being taught*.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, feminist pedagogies can be characterised by four key aspects or principles:

- 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)

These key principles work together towards an overarching goal of transforming patriarchal structures and oppression, which should be at the core of all feminist pedagogical work. This is underpinned by a commitment to 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 characterized by increased social justice).<sup>4</sup> As such, feminist pedagogies view learning “through the lens of oppression and attempts to look at racial, sexual, and social diversity and inequality.”<sup>5</sup> They are driven by the “need to understand how patriarchal ideology has truncated and distorted our knowledge and experiences of ourselves and the world”<sup>6</sup>, and how this translates into the classroom setting.

The paper addresses two key areas:

- 1 UN Women Training Centre (2016) *UN Women Training Centre Annual Report 2015*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p.8.
- 2 Mukhopadhyay, M. and F. Wong (2007) “Introduction: Revisiting gender training. The making and remaking of gender knowledge”, *Revisiting Gender Training: The Making and Remaking of Gender Knowledge – A Global Sourcebook*. Amsterdam: KIT Royal Tropical Institute, The Netherlands. Available: [https://www.kit.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/1031\\_Gender-revisiting-web2.pdf](https://www.kit.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/1031_Gender-revisiting-web2.pdf)
- 3 Porter, F. and Smyth, I. (1998) “Gender training for development practitioners: only a partial solution”, *Gender and Development*, 6(2), pp. 59-64.
- 4 Manicom, A. (1992) “Feminist Pedagogy: Transformations, Standpoints, and Politics”, *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17(3), p. 366-367.
- 5 Rajani, L. (2015) “Feminist Pedagogy in University Classroom: Understanding the Classroom as a Place where Knowledge is Created as Opposed to Knowledge Being Delivered to Students”, Paper presented at *the 2015 Hawaii University International Conferences*. Available: <http://www.huichawaii.org/assets/lata,-rajani---2015-ahse-huic.pdf>
- 6 Martel, A. and Peterat, L. (1988) “Feminist Pedagogies: From Pedagogic Romanticism to the Success of Authenticity”, in P. Tancred-Sheriff (ed.), *Feminist Research: Prospect and Retrospect*. Montreal: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, p. 82.

### 1. Applying feminist pedagogical principles in training for gender equality

The first section of the paper sets out the four core principles of feminist pedagogies and explores the specific points raised for each principle in the context of training for gender equality.

#### For participatory learning:

- The extent to which training scenarios (be they in person, self-paced or moderated) be called ‘feminist classrooms’
- Whether this is something about which the Training Centre and other training institutions can be explicit
- What needs to be done in training for gender equality to create learning environments that are “collaborative, experiential, egalitarian, interactive, empowering, relational and affective”<sup>7</sup>
- Addressing these issues in online training for gender equality to ensure that such training processes adhere to feminist pedagogical principles<sup>8</sup>

#### In terms of the validation of personal experience:

- The challenges of when participants’ ‘personal experience’ comes into tension with feminist ideas about gender inequality, patriarchy and subordination. This relates to ongoing debates about dealing with privilege in training for gender equality, and what specific tools and strategies can be used to address these challenges.<sup>9</sup>
- Tensions around which participants are able to speak out in training scenarios, and which are not. Which aspects of experience may be voiced and validated, and which may be marginalized?
- Dealing with the “various and often competing assertions that students advance about their identities and our shared social world”. Trainers need to develop strategies to “manage the proliferation of experience-based knowledge claims and avoid the anti-democratic tendency to see experiential claims to know (especially to know about oppression) as sacrosanct”.<sup>10</sup>
- The need to establish links between personal experience and personal empowerment in the training context

#### The principle of encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability:

- Embedding feminist pedagogical principles to ensure that all stages of the training cycle are geared towards gender-transformative change, social justice and activism
- Acknowledging the highly politicised nature of training for gender equality, it is important to establish how feminist pedagogies best be employed to support participants to enact change at different levels – personal, institutional and societal

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7 Gajjala, R., Rybas, N. and Zhang, Y. "Chapter 21: Producing Digitally Mediated Environments as Sites for Criticam Feminist Pedagogy", in D.L. Fassett and J.T. Warren (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Communication and Instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, edited by p. 415.

8 Kirkup, G., Schmitz, S., Kotkamp, E., Rommes, E. and Hiltunen, A.M. (2010). "Towards a Feminist Manifesto for E-Learning: Principles to Inform Practices", In S. Booth, S. Goodman and G. Kirkup (Eds.), *Gender issues in learning and working with information technology: Social constructs and cultural contexts*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, p. 256. Available: <http://www.irma-international.org/viewtitle/42500/>

9 Ferguson, L. (2019) "Exploring privilege through feminist gender training", *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 2 (1): 113-130

10 Sanchez-Casal, S. and MacDonald A. "Introduction: Feminist Reflections on the Pedagogical Relevance of Identity", in S. Sanchez-Casal and A. MacDonald (Eds.), *Twenty-First-Century Feminist Classrooms: Pedagogies of Power and Difference*. , Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 2.



- Developing 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.

Finally, in terms of the **development of critical thinking and open-mindedness**:

- The need to maximise the space for critical thinking in contexts where the focus is on results and outcomes – that is, a technocratic approach to gender equality
- Resisting the impetus to over-simplify and depoliticise gender issues and analysis in order to meet a specific set of learning requirements
- Paying attention to these challenges while striving for transformative learning experiences which promote critical thinking among training participants

This brief discussion demonstrates the particular analytical points raised for applying feminist pedagogies in different contexts of training for gender equality, and across different stages of the training cycle. The concern of this paper is to develop concrete proposals for how these principles can guide the theory and practice of training for gender equality, as developed in the following section.

## *2. Integrating feminist pedagogical principles into the Training Cycle*

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.**

Drawing on examples from practice, the paper analyses how feminist pedagogical principles can be integrated into the different phases of the Training Cycle, highlighting a number of key aspects for each.

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 gender-transformative social change.** A number of practical activities conducted in the first phase of training can adopt a feminist pedagogical approach:

- Conducting a thorough learning needs assessment drawing on the principles of participation and validation of personal experience and based on best practice in the field.
- Explicitly and openly discussing change with the commissioning institution, encouraging an open dialogue on the type of change that the training is expected to bring about. This opens up space for including the principles of social justice, accountability and critical thinking at later phases in the training cycle.
- Clearly establishing the remit, scope and modality of the training. Feminist pedagogical principles should be at the forefront of such discussions to ensure that opportunities are created for developing a training curriculum that is consciously aligned with such principles.

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 practical terms, this involves:

- A strong focus on participation in the curriculum development process, involving the training participants as early in the process and as much as is feasible. New tools and methods of curriculum design are required that invoke participation from the training participants and commissioning institutions.

- A commitment to feminist epistemology, and understandings of the training scenario as one of a ‘circulation of knowledges on gender’, rather than a top-down process of ‘knowledge transfer’.<sup>11</sup>
- Ensuring that participants’ personal and professional experiences and knowledges on gender are integrated into the curriculum, in order to link personal experience with institutional structures of subordination.<sup>12</sup>
- At the same time, acknowledging the power dynamics of different training scenarios, and integrating a ‘pedagogy for the privileged’ or “education for the privileged” – developed in the fields of Critical Masculinities Studies and Whiteness Studies – into the curriculum development process when appropriate.
- Building a range of feminist pedagogical methods and techniques in the training design, such as mind-body relationship activities and participatory, experiential learning.

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.** Some practical points for integrating feminist pedagogical principles include:

- In order to promote **participation**, the trainer can be positioned as a ‘feminist pedagogue’, working at all times in a dual role as facilitator and learner. This requires cultivating a ‘feminist classroom’, in which difference and diversity are celebrated whilst fostering a culture of debate and contestation.
- Trainers can avoid assuming the role of, but rather operate within more “nuanced, grounded, iterative and relationship-oriented understandings” of processes of knowledge transfer.<sup>13</sup>
- **Validate and respect the diverse knowledges and experiences** of gender in the training scenario, whilst maintaining a commitment to feminist political principles and an over-arching agenda of transformation. This may involve the trainers’ acknowledging their own bias and positionality.
- Develop strategies to manage “the proliferation of experience-based knowledge claims and avoid the anti-democratic tendency to see experiential claims to know (especially to know about oppression) as sacrosanct”<sup>14</sup> Intersectionality is a key concept here for engaging the different experiences of participants through exploring their positionality in the multiple hierarchies of gender, class, ethnicity, age, nationality etc.
- In order to encourage **social justice, activism and accountability**, trainers need to manage deliberation and contestation in a skilful, effective way in order to harness resistances towards change and transformation.

Finally, for Evaluation, integrating feminist pedagogical principles entails:

- Paying attention to **participation** in the development of the evaluation methodology, and ensuring meaningful participation throughout the evaluation cycle.

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11 Bustelo, M. Ferguson, L. and Forest, M. (2016) “Conclusions”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 157-174.

12 *SAGE Handbook of Communication and Instruction*, D. L. Fassett and J. T. Warren (Eds.), p. 415.

13 Mukhopadhyay, M. and F. Wong (2007) “Introduction: *Revisiting gender training. The making and remaking of gender knowledge*”, *Revisiting Gender Training: The Making and Remaking of Gender Knowledge – A Global Sourcebook*. Amsterdam: KIT Royal Tropical Institute, The Netherlands, p. 13.

14 Sanchez-Casal, S. and MacDonald A. “Introduction: Feminist Reflections on the Pedagogical Relevance of Identity”, in S. Sanchez-Casal and A. MacDonald (Eds.), *Twenty-First-Century Feminist Classrooms: Pedagogies of Power and Difference*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 2.

- Allowing space for the **validation of personal experience** in the evaluation process through the inclusion of qualitative evaluation methods and a close match between the evaluation process and the experiences of the training, and the institution in which it is taking place.
- Promoting **social justice, activism and accountability**, for example in asking participants to develop personal gender equality action plans setting out how they will build on the training in their daily work and life. These can be followed up collectively in a Community of Practice among the participants and other colleagues or peers.
- The evaluation process can contribute to the **development of critical thinking and open-mindedness** by including critical questions that invoke reflection on the part of training participants.

If feminist pedagogical principles are integrated through all stages of the Training Cycle, from analysis to evaluation, the power dynamics and politics of each stage may be effectively addressed.

By looking at what practices can contribute to the realisation of the four key pedagogical principles in training, and how these can be practically integrated throughout the Training Cycle, the UN Women Training Centre hopes to make a significant contribution to pedagogical coherence in the field of transformative training for gender equality. The Statement presented below is intended as a first step, primed to generate debate around feminist pedagogies in training, towards ever more transformative outcomes in favour of gender equality.

## Statement of Pedagogical Principles and Practices for Training for Gender Equality

The UN Women Training Centre is committed to a feminist pedagogical approach, in order to maximise the potential for training for gender equality to contribute to transformative change. This is underpinned by a commitment to 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 characterized by increased social justice).<sup>15</sup>

Four key principles can be identified to guide the pedagogical work of training for gender equality:

- participatory learning;
- validation of personal experience;
- encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability; and
- development of critical thinking and open-mindedness.<sup>16</sup>

The UN Women Training Centre works from these four core principles. In practice, this means that

*In order to promote participatory learning, training for gender equality:*

- Takes seriously the power dynamics of the training scenario, including paying attention to intersectional inequalities, and strives to overcome these

<sup>15</sup> Manicom, A. (1992) "Feminist Pedagogy: Transformations, Standpoints, and Politics", *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17(3), p. 366-367.

<sup>16</sup> Manicom, A. (1992) "Feminist Pedagogy: Transformations, Standpoints, and Politics", *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17(3), p. 366-367.

- Engages non-hierarchical modes of teaching and learning
- Involves openness on the part of the trainer to opportunities for mutual learning and self-questioning<sup>17</sup>
- Places a strong process on participation throughout the training cycle, from curriculum development through to evaluation
- Supports trainers to engage in the dual roles of facilitator and learner by positioning themselves as ‘feminist pedagogues’
- Ensures that the training environment adheres to the principles of the ‘feminist classroom’. In online training, pays particular attention to student voice, participation, and negotiation<sup>18</sup>

***In order to ensure that personal experience is validated, training for gender equality:***

- Constructs a learning environment that promotes shared and deliberative learning
- Acknowledges the politics of knowledge on gender, and works towards decolonising feminist knowledge
- Integrates participants’ personal and professional experiences and knowledges on gender into the curriculum and evaluation process
- Encourages participants and trainers to reveal their biases and blindspots in relation to gender, in order to make these visible and open to deliberation
- Promotes a circulation of knowledges rather than a top-down process of knowledge transfer
- Draws on the participants’ different locations in intersecting hierarchies to help them explore their own positionality in relation to power dynamics in the organisation and broader social structures
- Ensures that online learning environments respect experience-based knowledge and encourage students to situate and apply knowledge in a way that is personally meaningful and relevant<sup>19</sup>
- Develops strategies for challenging and tackling beliefs that are antithetical to gender equality, particularly when training the privileged or powerful

***In order to encourage social understanding and activism, training for gender equality:***

- Ensures that training for gender equality is always considered a ‘political act’
- Applies a flexible approach while maintaining an overarching commitment to transformative social change
- Has a clear idea about the change or transformation to which the training is expected to contribute, and is embedded in a broader Theory of Change

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17 Kunz, R. (2016) “Windows of Opportunity, Trojan Horses, and Waves of Women on the Move: De-colonizing the Circulation of Feminist Knowledges through Metaphors?”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 150-151.

18 Kirkup, G., Schmitz, S., Kotkamp, E., Rommes, E. and Hiltunen, A.M. (2010). “Towards a Feminist Manifesto for E-Learning: Principles to Inform Practices”, In S. Booth, S. Goodman and G. Kirkup (Eds.), *Gender issues in learning and working with information technology: Social constructs and cultural contexts*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, p. 256. Available: <http://www.irma-international.org/viewtitle/42500/>

19 Lather, P. (2006). The absent presence: Patriarchy, capitalism, and the nature of teacher work. In E. F. Jr. Provenzo (Ed.), *Critical issues in education: An anthology of readings*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 154-167; Sanchez-Casal, S. and Macdonald, A. (Eds.) (2002) *Twenty-first century feminist classrooms: Pedagogies of identity and difference*. New York: Palgrave.

- Employs trainers skilled in managing deliberation and contestation in order to harness resistances towards social change
- Engages participants in active restructuring of their existing KDA system, not merely offer new factual knowledge. That is, training is most likely to evoke change if it increases *knowledge* and the *desire* to learn, while providing advocacy skills or access to different networks of knowers (*ability* to challenge gender norms)<sup>20</sup>
- Encourages and supports participants to be accountable for gender equality and to become gender advocates within their organisation
- Develops practical tools to encourage activism in e-learning scenarios. E.g. buddy system, personal gender equality plan of action etc.

***In order to develop critical thinking and open-mindedness, training for gender equality:***

- Allows space for ambiguity and resists ‘easy answers’ or a focus on conveying instrumental knowledge and technocratic skills
- Focuses on increasing participants’ Desire to learn about gender and their Ability to challenge gender inequality by fostering critical thinking in the training scenario<sup>21</sup>
- Encourages participants to be open-minded in their engagement with the perspectives of other participants, and support them to take these seriously
- Engages training commissioners to create a space for critical thinking to be put into practice after the training
- Involves participants in structured debate which helps develop more nuanced understandings of opposing views and experiences
- Includes critical questions that invoke reflection on the part of participants and commissioners during the evaluation process

In addition to the broad application of these four principles, the UN Women Training Centre highlights the importance of integrating a feminist pedagogical approach into all stages of the training cycle. Here are some of the key questions to be considered:

## Checklist: Feminist Pedagogies in the Training Cycle

***Analysis: assessing feasibility and learning needs***

- Is the scope of the training sufficient to be able to integrate the four principles of feminist pedagogies? Has the remit, scope and modality of the training been clearly established to ensure opportunities for developing a training curriculum that is consciously aligned with feminist pedagogical principles?
- What can a diagnostic assessment of the institution and its needs in terms of gender equality tell us about the power dynamics at work? How can participants’ existing knowledge and experience on gender be assessed?

<sup>20</sup> UN Women Training Centre (2019) Theory of Change in Training for Gender Equality. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre; Marx Ferree, M. (N/D) *Training for gender equality as a source of organisational change*. Unpublished background paper, p. 10-11.

<sup>21</sup> UN Women Training Centre (2019) Theory of Change in Training for Gender Equality Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre; Marx Ferree, (N/D) *Training for gender equality as a source of organisational change*. Unpublished background paper, p. 10-11.

- Does the learning assessment draw on the principles of participation and validation of personal experience, based on best practice in the field?
- What kind of change or transformation is this training intended to bring about, or contribute to? Has this been openly discussed with the training commissioners?

***Planning: recruiting participants and facilitators, organising logistics, and conceptualize technical content***

- What logistical aspects need to be taken into consideration to ensure the construction of a ‘feminist classroom’ for the training environment?
- How can terms of reference for trainers be designed to ensure that feminist pedagogical principles will be respected in the training environment?
- How can the technical content and learning objectives be consciously aligned with feminist pedagogical principles?

***Design: constructing the outline of the training***

- What particular aspects of power and intersectional hierarchies need to be taken into account in the design of the training? How can we integrate a pedagogy for the privileged into the training scenario to respond to these power differences?
- How can we ensure that the course design respects a circulation of knowledges rather than top-down knowledge transfer?
- Is there space for a participatory approach to developing the objectives and outline of the training? At what stage of the process are learners brought in to review and offer feedback on the course content and approach?

***Development: content and methods***

- What is best practice in feminist pedagogies for this kind (length, modality, objectives, etc.) of training?
- What kinds of activities and methods are most likely to lead to an increase in participants’ Knowledge, Desire and Ability to address gender inequality?
- Based on the learning assessment, how can participants’ already existing knowledge and experience be built into the course design?

***Implementation: running the training***

- How can the trainer assume the dual role of facilitator and learner by taking on the mantle of a feminist pedagogue?
- What preparation can be done by the trainer/s in advance of the training to construct a ‘feminist classroom’? What kind of introduction to the training can best facilitate a feminist pedagogical learning environment?
- How can different understandings of gender and gender equality be articulated in the training scenario? How can participants’ knowledge and experience of gender be validated whilst maintaining a commitment to feminist political principles and an over-arching agenda of transformation?
- How can deliberation and contestation be managed effectively to harness resistances towards change and transformation? How can power dynamics be addressed in the training scenario in a way that respects difference and challenges privilege?

*Evaluation: monitoring, evaluation and follow-up*

- What evaluation processes are best suited to measuring how training contributes to feminist outcomes? What kinds of evaluation criteria best match the four principles of feminist pedagogies?
- What kinds of follow up activities are required to support participants to implement the expected changes? How can communities of learners be created and supported to encourage the implementation of institutional change?
- How can feminist pedagogical practices be developed and documented in a collective and reflexive manner? How can the process of documenting such practices be inclusive of practitioners from a range of backgrounds?

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. This Statement is intended as a call for practitioners, trainers and experts to explore how such principles and practices can be applied in different institutions and contexts across the field of training for gender equality.

# INTRODUCTION

The UN Women Training Centre is committed to ‘participatory, non-hierarchical, and power-sharing learning’ throughout its work.<sup>22</sup> As set out in the Annual Report 2014:

As the ultimate goal of our organisation is to transform the patriarchal system, it is important that our learning processes do not mirror patriarchal approaches. That means learning occurs under the spirit of equal and egalitarian participation where all learners are teachers and all teachers are learners. We recognize that hierarchal and power imbalance learning environments are harmful and do not align with gender equality and human rights principles.<sup>23</sup>

The UN Women Training Centre’s *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality* offers a number of insights into how feminist pedagogical principles work in practice:

- Participatory planning and learning, particularly horizontal learning processes and avoiding the reproduction of unequal power relations;
- Balancing theory and practice, with an emphasis on practical examples from participants’ own experiences to encourage them to connect what they learned during training with their professional and private lives;
- Contextual sensitivity in terms of adapting training to the cultural, political, and sectoral context of participants;
- Facilitator characteristics, in terms of the characteristics necessary to easily connect and interact with participants as well as the employment of reflexivity to mitigate against hierarchies of power and privilege between trainers and trainees;
- Modes/modalities of learning, contextualised to the participants’ needs; and
- Monitoring and evaluation, as necessary components of training’s overall sustainability.<sup>24</sup>

The **objective of this paper** is to build on these findings and to clarify more concretely what this means and how this can be applied in practice. This will serve to:

- Think about ways of articulating this approach
- Make the Training Centre’s pedagogical approach visible
- Promote transparency among key stakeholders and training participants

22 UN Women Training Centre (2016) *UN Women Training Centre Annual Report 2015*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p.8.

23 UN Women Training Centre (2015) *2014 At a Glance*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 9. Available: [http://www.un-women.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/training%20center\\_anual\\_report\\_2014\\_final.pdf?v=1](http://www.un-women.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/training%20center_anual_report_2014_final.pdf?v=1)

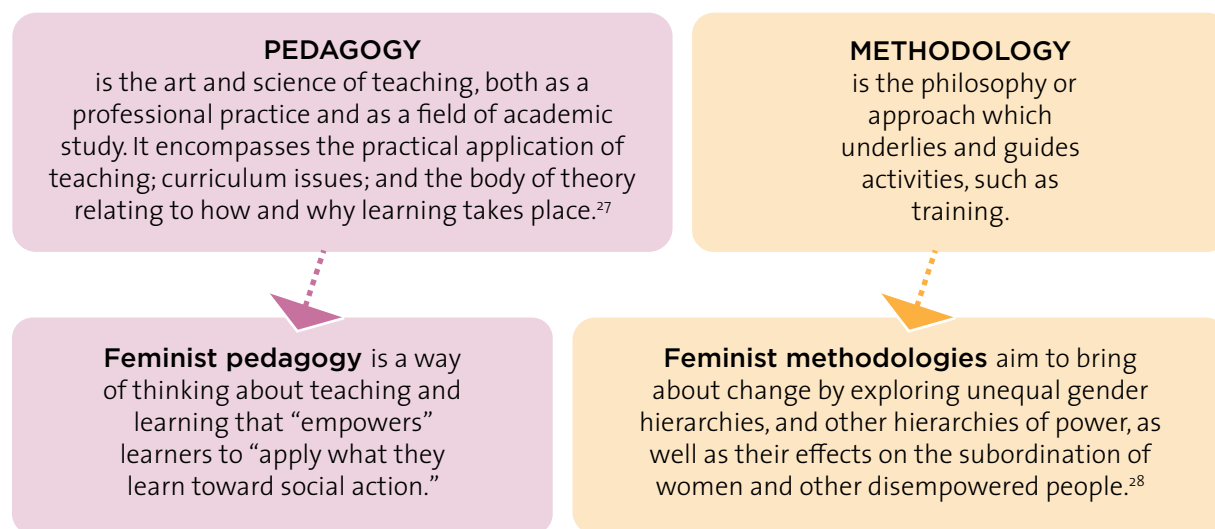
24 UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Compendium of Good Practices on Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 19-22.



In order to achieve this, the paper explores how feminist pedagogical principles can guide the theory and practice of training for gender equality. This is a valuable exercise for the field of training for gender equality, as more work is needed on methodological and epistemological approaches, as well as understanding how differences in privilege affect the learning process.<sup>25</sup> There is a need to further distinguish in training for gender equality between *what is being taught* and *how it is being taught*.<sup>26</sup> This paper can be considered a contribution to addressing this gap. This paper is one of a series of Working Papers commissioned by the Training Centre which can either be read as a stand-alone paper or in conjunction with the papers on Theory of Change, Quality and Evaluation.

As Figure 1 shows, there are important differences between pedagogies and methodology.

**FIGURE 1: PEDAGOGY VS. METHODOLOGY**



Source: UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Typology on Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.<sup>29</sup>

In this paper, we use the term “feminist pedagogies” in the plural, to acknowledge the diversity and different origins of such approaches. Feminist pedagogies have their roots in three key strands. First, critical pedagogies developed by Paulo Freire and others, adhering to the view that: “Besides being an act of knowing, education

25 Mukhopadhyay, M. and F. Wong (2007) “Introduction: Revisiting gender training. The making and remaking of gender knowledge”, *Revisiting Gender Training: The Making and Remaking of Gender Knowledge – A Global Sourcebook*. Amsterdam: KIT Royal Tropical Institute, The Netherlands.

26 Porter, F. and Smyth, I. (1998) “Gender training for development practitioners: only a partial solution”, *Gender and Development*, 6(2), pp. 59-64.

27 UNESCO-IBE (2013) *Glossary of Curriculum Terminology*. Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education. Available: [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/IBE\\_GlossaryCurriculumTerminology2013\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/IBE_GlossaryCurriculumTerminology2013_eng.pdf)

28 Tickner, J. A. (2005) “What Is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 49, p. 4.

29 UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Typology on Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.

is also a political act. That is why no pedagogy is neutral.”<sup>30</sup> As argued throughout the paper, if training is to be a transformative learning process then it must also be considered a ‘political act’. Second, aspects of feminist pedagogies originate from the exercises of experience-sharing in women’s community groups during the women’s liberation movement, which can be related to ‘awareness raising and consciousness-building’<sup>31</sup> activities in training for gender equality.<sup>32</sup> Third – and perhaps most importantly - feminist pedagogies have been developed in relation to the teaching of women’s studies in university environments, ensuring that feminist theories and practices inform such teaching.

While feminist pedagogies share some key aspects with other radical or critical pedagogies, feminist pedagogies are distinctive because of their “explicit goal of ending patriarchy and oppression and empowering or giving voice and influence to those disempowered by patriarchal structures.”<sup>33</sup>

A number of examples of feminist pedagogical principles in practice, as included in the Annex of this paper, allow us to discern the unifying traits which run through the application of feminist pedagogies in the sphere of training for gender equality (see Annex). Overall, feminist pedagogies can be characterised by four key aspects or principles:

- 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)

These key principles work together towards an overarching goal of transforming patriarchal structures and oppression, which should be at the core of all feminist pedagogical work.

The paper addresses two key areas:

- Applying feminist pedagogical principles to training for gender equality
- Integrating feminist pedagogical principles be integrated into the Training Cycle

The final section of the paper presents a ‘**Statement of Pedagogical Principles and Practices for Training for Gender Equality**’. This Statement brings together the key arguments and insights developed in this paper to draws on the proposals put forward in this paper. It sets out a vision for how feminist pedagogical principles can be applied in the field of training for gender equality, while acknowledging the specific challenges and limitations of training as a tool for transformation. The process of fine-tuning such a Statement should be on-going and

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<sup>30</sup> Freire, P. and Shor, I. (1987) *A pedagogy for liberation*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.

<sup>31</sup> UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Typology on Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre. Available: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/5/typology-on-training-for-gender-equality>

<sup>32</sup> Haraway, D. (1991) *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>33</sup> Shackelford, J. (1992) “Feminist Pedagogy: A Means for Bringing Critical Thinking and Creativity to the Economics Classroom”, *Alternative Pedagogies and Economic Education*, 80(2), p.570-571.

reflexive, including circulation of a draft among key stakeholders for feedback and suggested additions, as well as dissemination through the UN Women Training Centre Community of Practice.

- Applying feminist pedagogical principles in training for gender equality
- Integrating feminist pedagogical principles into the Training Cycle
- How do the key principles of feminist pedagogies apply to training for gender equality? Applying feminist pedagogical principles to training for gender equality

# APPLYING FEMINIST PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Drawing from the field of feminist pedagogies, four key principles can be identified to guide the pedagogical work of training for gender equality. These principles are underpinned by a commitment to 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 characterized by increased social justice).<sup>34</sup> As such, feminist pedagogies view learning “through the lens of oppression and attempts to look at racial, sexual, and social diversity and inequality.”<sup>35</sup> They are driven by the “need to understand how patriarchal ideology has truncated and distorted our knowledge and experiences of ourselves and the world”<sup>36</sup>, and how this translates into the classroom setting.

“The purpose of feminist practice is to raise the learners’ consciousness about patriarchal oppression, empower them to take action, and assist them to learn specific political strategies for activism.”<sup>37</sup>

To date, the majority of research and analysis on feminist pedagogies has focussed on the area of adult education. In addition, the majority of the literature focuses on formal education, paying less attention to informal education, which is important for learning and unlearning gender. As set out in the UN Women Training Centre Working Paper on Education and Training, there are some key differences between the fields of education and training as well as substantive overlaps. Here we explore how the principles of feminist pedagogies set out above can be analysed in relation to training for gender equality. This involves highlighting specific aspects of training scenarios, as opposed to more generic teaching of women’s studies or gender equality. A clear picture of these possibilities and limits are necessary to better understand what we can aim to achieve through training for gender equality. Later in the paper, some practical steps and tools are outlined for overcoming some of these challenges, as well as a discussion of how these principles can be applied at different stages of the Training Cycle.

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34 Manicom, A. (1992) “Feminist Pedagogy: Transformations, Standpoints, and Politics”, *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17(3), p. 366-367.

35 Rajani, L. (2015) “Feminist Pedagogy in University Classroom: Understanding the Classroom as a Place where Knowledge is Created as Opposed to Knowledge Being Delivered to Students”, Paper presented at the 2015 Hawaii University International Conferences. Available: <http://www.huichawaii.org/assets/lata,-rajani---2015-ahse-huic.pdf>

36 Martel, A. and Peterat, L. (1988) “Feminist Pedagogies: From Pedagogic Romanticism to the Success of Authenticity”, in P. Tancred-Sheriff (ed.), *Feminist Research: Prospect and Retrospect*. Montreal: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, p. 82.

37 Schoeman, S. (2015) “Feminist pedagogy as a new initiative in the education of South African teachers”, *KOERS Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 80(4). Available: <http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/koers/v80n4/02.pdf>

It should be noted that feminist pedagogical principles and practices are necessary for all levels and types of training (see Typology of Training for Gender Equality). Regardless of the scope and approach of training for gender equality, feminist pedagogies should guide the process and act as an over-arching framework.

## Participatory learning

This involves cultivating a learning environment in which the teacher and students work against the creation of hierarchy. Instead of being the 'expert' imparting knowledge, the feminist pedagogue becomes a facilitator and learner at the same time. The term 'the feminist classroom' is used here to denote a particular kind of feminist learning space,

*a place where there is a sense of struggle, where there is visible acknowledgment of the union of theory and practice, where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm in the contemporary university. Most importantly, feminist pedagogy should engage students in a learning process that makes the world 'more rather than less real'.<sup>38</sup>*

A feminist classroom is "collaborative, experiential, egalitarian, interactive, empowering, relational and affective", with the aim of supporting students to become sympathetic to the concerns of critical feminist pedagogy.<sup>39</sup> In addition, feminist pedagogies call for sensitivity to gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, multiculturalism, postcolonial criticism, and globalization.<sup>40</sup> Here it is useful to recall bell hooks' concept of a "democratic classroom"<sup>41</sup>, one which "challenges the fundamental assumptions of hierarchical education", "where everyone's presence is affirmed and valued" and in which teachers must "move attention away from ... [their] own voice and towards that of ... [their] students".<sup>42</sup> That is, feminist pedagogues must work to "decenter" authority and remain a learner in the classroom.<sup>43</sup>

Parker Palmer's notion of 'hospitality' in relation to learning spaces, while not specific to feminist pedagogies, is nevertheless helpful here.

*"Hospitality is not an end in itself. It is offered for the sake of what it can allow, permit, encourage, and yield. A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible, things without which no learning can occur — things like exposing ignorance, testing tentative hypotheses, challenging false or partial information, and mutual criticism of thought."<sup>44</sup>*

38 Hooks, bell. "Toward a Revolutionary Feminist Pedagogy." *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press, 1989. <http://people.oregonstate.edu/~vanlondp/wgss320/articles/Toward-Revolutionary-Feminist-Pedagogy-bell-hooks.pdf>

39 Gajjala, R., Rybas, N. and Zhang, Y. "Chapter 21: Producing Digitally Mediated Environments as Sites for Criticam Feminist Pedagogy", in D. L. Fassett and J. T. Warren (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Communication and Instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, edited by p. 415.

40 Wicker, K. O., Miller, S. and Dube, M. W. (2005) *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

41 Hooks, B. (1994) *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.

42 Penn, M. (1997) *Feminist Pedagogy as Praxis*, p. 218-219. Available: <http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=djglp>

43 Stanley-Spaeth, B. (2000) *Taming Talos: Cyberfeminist pedagogy in classical studies*. Available: <http://www.tulane.edu/~spaeth/talosabstract.htm>

44 Palmer, P. J. (1993) *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, p. 74.

Elaborating on this concept, Jackson argues that in a hospitable classroom “students are actively invited in rather than just neutrally tolerated, and challenges to the coherence of particular identities are advanced gently, respectfully, and in a spirit of mutual humility”.<sup>45</sup>

A number of specific aspects can be identified in the context of training for gender equality:

- The extent to which training scenarios (be they in person, self-paced or moderated) be called ‘feminist classrooms’
- Whether this is something about which the Training Centre and other training institutions can be explicit
- What needs to be done in training for gender equality to create learning environments that are “collaborative, experiential, egalitarian, interactive, empowering, relational and affective”<sup>46</sup>
- Addressing these issues in online training for gender equality to ensure that such training processes adhere to feminist pedagogical principles<sup>47</sup>

## Validation of personal experience

Valuing the personal as a source of legitimate and valid knowledge, critical feminist pedagogues encourage students to understand personal experience as political, historical and socially constructed.<sup>48</sup> The goal is to help students develop a critical framework that will enable and empower them to link personal experience with institutional structures of subordination.<sup>49</sup> In practice, this involves encouraging students to put the voices of “experts” in dialogue with their own and others’ voices and experiences<sup>50</sup>, in a process that Belenky et al. refer to as “connected learning.” It also requires an inclusive environment in which experience is not assumed to be “white and heterosexual”.<sup>51</sup>

The validation of personal experience is linked to empowerment. In training for gender equality, empowerment can be understood in two key ways – in that participants are empowered to reflect on their own personal experiences on intersecting inequalities, and then to use this critical engagement to act for the transformation of such inequalities in their own contexts. However, the relationship between personal experience and empowerment

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45 Jackson, P. T. (2016) “Safe spaces and hospitable classrooms”. *Relations International*. Available: <http://relationsinternational.com/safe-spaces-hospitable-classrooms/>

46 Gajjala, R., Rybas, N. and Zhang, Y. "Chapter 21: Producing Digitally Mediated Environments as Sites for Critical Feminist Pedagogy", in D. L. Fassett and J. T. Warren (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Communication and Instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, edited by p. 415.

47 Kirkup, G., Schmitz, S., Kotkamp, E., Rommes, E. and Hiltunen, A.M. (2010). “Towards a Feminist Manifesto for E-Learning: Principles to Inform Practices”, In S. Booth, S. Goodman and G. Kirkup (Eds.), *Gender issues in learning and working with information technology: Social constructs and cultural contexts*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, p. 256. Available: <http://www.irma-international.org/viewtitle/42500/>

48 Gajjala, R., Rybas, N. and Zhang, Y. "Chapter 21: Producing Digitally Mediated Environments as Sites for Critical Feminist Pedagogy", in D. L. Fassett and J. T. Warren (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Communication and Instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, edited by p. 415.

49 Hooks, b. (1994) *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge; Klein, R. D. (1987) "The dynamics of the women's studies classroom: a review essay of the teaching practice of women's studies in higher education", *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 10(2), pp. 187-202.

50 Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B.M., Goldberger, N.R. and Tarule, J.M. (1986) *Women's Ways of Knowing*. New York: Basic Books ; Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B.M., Goldberger, N.R. and Tarule, J.M. (1997) *Women's Ways of Knowing. 10th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Basic Books.

51 <http://www.genderandeducation.com/resources/pedagogies/feminist-pedagogy-2/>

should not be considered straightforward and unproblematic. Rather, as Orner argues, it is important to consider “the intersection of identity, language, context, and power that inform all pedagogical relations.”<sup>52</sup> As she argues, a learner’s “voice” can “at best be tentative and temporary given the changing, often contradictory relations of power at multiple levels of social life.”<sup>53</sup> As such, attention needs to be paid to the politics of personal experience, and how this interrelates with other aspects of the learning experience. For the purposes of training for gender equality, empowerment can be understood as “a process one undertakes for oneself” that involves “analysing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognising systematic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of our lives.”<sup>54</sup>

In terms of gender-transformative training, a number of issues are worth highlighting here:

- The challenges of when participants’ ‘personal experience’ comes into tension with feminist ideas about gender inequality, patriarchy and subordination. This relates to ongoing debates about dealing with privilege in training for gender equality, and what specific tools and strategies can be used to address these challenges.<sup>55</sup>
- Tensions around which participants are able to speak out in training scenarios, and which are not; which aspects of experience may be voiced and validated, and which may be marginalized.
- Dealing with the “various and often competing assertions that students advance about their identities and our shared social world”. Trainers need to develop strategies to “manage the proliferation of experience-based knowledge claims and avoid the anti-democratic tendency to see experiential claims to know (especially to know about oppression) as sacrosanct.”<sup>56</sup>
- The need to establish links between personal experience and personal empowerment in the training context

## Encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability

Personal change has long been an important aspect of feminist pedagogies, rooted in feminist consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s and '70s.<sup>57</sup> While individual empowerment is important, feminist pedagogies aim to translate these feminist principles into the transformation of social lives and social justice. Feminism is committed to social change, and feminist practice is integral to a feminist pedagogy.<sup>58</sup> As such it encourages people “to organise themselves to act collectively to achieve the desired goals”<sup>59</sup>, as a move towards mobilisation for social

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52 Cook-Sather, A. (2007) “Resisting the Impositional Potential of Student Voice Work: Lessons for Liberatory Educational Research from Poststructuralist Feminist Critiques of Critical Pedagogy”, *Discourse*, 28(3), pp. 389-403. Available: [http://repository.brynmawr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=edu\\_pubs](http://repository.brynmawr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=edu_pubs)

53 Orner, M. (1992) “Interrupting the Calls for Student Voice in ‘Liberatory Education’: A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective”, in C. Luke and J. Gore (eds.), *Feminism and Critical Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge, p. 79.

54 Lather, P. (1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy: With/in the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge, p. 4

55 Ferguson, L. (2019) “Exploring privilege through feminist gender training”, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 2 (1): 113-130

56 Sanchez-Casal, S. and MacDonald A. “Introduction: Feminist Reflections on the Pedagogical Relevance of Identity”, in S. Sanchez-Casal and A. MacDonald (Eds.), *Twenty-First-Century Feminist Classrooms: Pedagogies of Power and Difference*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 2.

57 Hoffman F. L. and Stake, J. E. (2001) “Feminist Pedagogy in Theory and Practice: An Empirical Investigation”, *NWSA Journal*, 19, pp. 79-97.

58 Fassett, D. L. and Warren, J. T. (Eds.) (2010) *The SAGE Handbook of Communication and Instruction*, p. 415.

59 WHO (2006) *Training Manual for Community-based Initiatives: A Practical Tool for trainers and trainees*. Toshka, Egypt: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

transformation.<sup>60</sup> Feminist pedagogy is also deeply concerned with the accountability of both individuals and institutions towards social justice.

Bell hooks' notion of "engaged pedagogy", for instance, emphasises well-being which "involves a knowledge of oneself and an accountability for one's actions".<sup>61</sup> While she distinguishes this from feminist pedagogies, arguably notions of accountability are in fact integral here. Learning processes guided by feminist pedagogical principles must hold learners, facilitators and institutions accountable for their attitudes, behaviours and practices/actions. This relates again to the discussion of empowerment above, invoking a more collectivist notion of empowerment, which builds on and goes beyond the kind of personal empowerment processes enacted through reflection on personal experiences.

This principle raises a number of points specific to training for gender equality:

- Embedding feminist pedagogical principles to ensure that all stages of the training cycle are geared towards transformative change, social justice and activism
- Acknowledging the highly politicised nature of training for gender equality, it is important to establish how feminist pedagogies best be employed to support participants to enact change at different levels – personal, institutional and societal
- Developing 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.

## Development of critical thinking and open-mindedness

Feminist pedagogies support class participants not merely to acquire new knowledge, but also to develop their thinking in new directions. As Kelly argues, "teachers and trainers commit to guiding learners to become independent thinkers who can use "gender" as a critical lens to examine power, social constructions of expertise and what constitutes 'knowledge.'"<sup>62</sup> In order to be able to explore the 'personal experience' discussed above, learners must be able to compare and evaluate evidence from diverse standpoints and experiences, and to be open to changing one's own perspective and opinions in light of these comparisons. Critical thinking, therefore, is "both dialogical and dialectical, and requires tolerance for ambiguity and difference as learners engage with diverse others".<sup>63</sup> As Miller suggests, feminist pedagogies "introduce into the classroom a plethora of possibilities that resist easy answers and disallow the maintenance of homogenous neatness". She proposes that struggles in the community and issues considered controversial and urgent by society can "all become opportunities for the praxis of critical feminist pedagogy."<sup>64</sup>

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60 UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Typology on Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.

61 Berila, B. (2016) *Integrating Mindfulness Into Anti-Oppression Pedagogy: Social Justice in Higher Education*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 7.

62 Kelly, K. (2015) *Social Learning, Adult Learning and Feminist Pedagogies*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, 63 Ibid.

64 Miller, A. S. (2005) "Feminist pedagogies: Implications of a liberative praxis", in K. O. Wicker, A. S. Miller and M. W. Dube (Eds.) *Feminism New Testament Studies: Global and future perspectives*. New York: Routledge, p. 36.



Learners are not simply “empty mugs” awaiting new and better knowledge from the “jug” of formal gender expertise; instead, training works best when it acknowledges its role in encouraging and supporting contestation over the power of discourse in the existing social relations.<sup>65</sup>

In feminist pedagogical approaches, critical thinking and open-mindedness are qualities that must be adopted by teachers as much as by students. Poststructuralist feminist pedagogical approaches, for example, call for attention to the “gaps and ruptures in practice – the breaks, confusion and contradiction that are always part of the interplay in teaching”, arguing that these offer the “greatest insight and possibilities for change”.<sup>66</sup> Other approaches focus more substantively on authenticity or self-liberation. For bell hooks, such an approach involves “radical openness’, ‘discernment’ and ‘care of the soul.’”<sup>67</sup> Weiler calls for feminist teachers to use emotions as “links between a kind of inner truth or inner self and the outer world”<sup>68</sup> This draws on notions of a ‘spirituality of education’ such as that proposed by Parker Palmer, in which ‘good’ teachers “bring students into community with themselves and each other – not simply for the sake of warm feelings, but to do the difficult things that teaching and learning require.”<sup>69</sup> Taken together, there is a call for feminist teachers to cultivate self-reflection, authenticity and connection, both with their inner selves and with – and between - their students.

A number of points can be raised in terms of critical thinking and open-mindedness in training for gender equality:

- The need to maximise the space for critical thinking in contexts where the focus is on results and outcomes – that is, a technocratic approach to gender equality
- Resisting the impetus to over-simplify and depoliticise gender issues and analysis in order to meet a specific set of learning requirements
- Paying attention to these challenges while striving for transformative learning experiences which promote critical thinking among training participants

From this brief discussion, it is clear that there are particular challenges in applying feminist pedagogies in different contexts of training for gender equality, and across different stages of the training cycle. Despite such constraints, the concern of this paper is to develop concrete proposals for how these principles can guide the theory and practice of training for gender equality. In the next section, we explore how feminist pedagogical principles can be integrated into the Training Cycle, drawing on analysis and empirical evidence from the field.

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65 Marx Ferree, M. (N/D) *Training for gender equality as a source of organisational change*. Unpublished background paper, p. 10-11.

66 Orner, M. (1992) “Interrupting the Calls for Student Voice in ‘Liberatory Education’: A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective”, in C. Luke and J. Gore (eds.), *Feminism and Critical Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge, p. 85.

67 Hooks, b. (2010) *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. New York: Routledge, p. 8-10.

68 Weiler, K. (1991) “Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference”, *Harvard Educational Review*, 61(4), p. 463.

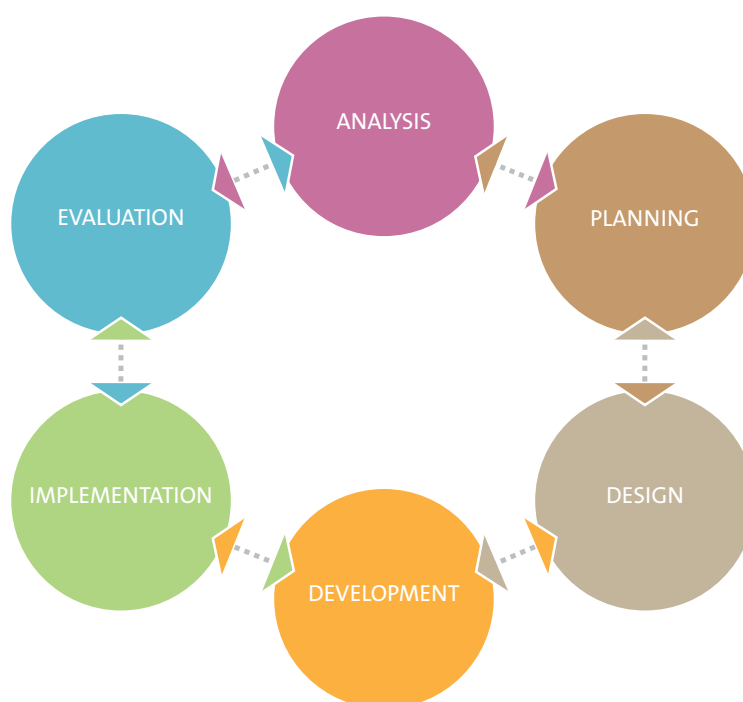
69 Palmer, P.J. (1993) *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, p. xi.

# INTEGRATING FEMINIST PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES INTO THE TRAINING CYCLE

It is important to note that the application of these principles in the context of training for gender equality goes well beyond the delivery of the training and the content of training courses. Rather, the entire training cycle – from analysis stage through to the planning, design, development, implementation and evaluation – must be guided by feminist pedagogies (see Figure 2). 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.

Training for gender equality is a diverse practice, incorporating a range of timescales, formats and approaches. Nevertheless, despite the form and scope, feminist pedagogical principles and practices should be considered as a guiding framework for all types of training for gender equality.

**FIGURE 2 – THE STAGES OF THE TRAINING CYCLE**



Source: *Typology on Training for Gender Equality*.<sup>70</sup>

70 UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Typology on Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.

The aim here is to outline how feminist pedagogical principles can be applied to the training cycle in a concrete manner. In order to do this, we take three key phases of the cycle and analyse these in turn: analysis and planning; design and development; and implementation and evaluation. Drawing on literature and practice from the field of training for gender equality, we explore the key issues and potential tools for applying the four principles to each phase. For an overview of the different phases of the Training Cycle please see the Typology on Training for Gender Equality.

## Analysis and Planning

Feminist pedagogical principles come to the fore at the inception stage of any training initiative or programme. This first phase involves assessing feasibility and learning needs; and recruiting participants and facilitators, organising logistics, and conceptualising technical content. Initial discussions and negotiations with the institution or department commissioning the training provide a window for maximising the potential of training to contribute to gender-transformative change. A key challenge to acknowledge here is a pervading resistance to the term ‘feminism’ from many institutions, including those which commission training for gender equality. Lombardo and Mergaert’s work on resistances teases out the complexities of gender training processes, showing how “even trainings that are supposedly “about transferring knowledge”, and not “about attitude change”, are in fact “about political positions towards gender equality”.<sup>71</sup> **As such, 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.**

The feasibility of explicitly adopting a feminist approach may vary depending on the limitations of the specific context, as well as the institutional politics and dynamics at play. Nevertheless, a number of practical activities conducted in the first phase of training can adopt a feminist pedagogical approach:

- Conducting a thorough learning needs assessment drawing on the principles of participation and validation of personal experience and based on best practice in the field. See for example ESCWA’s and Promundo’s experiences detailed in the Annex.
- Explicitly and openly discussing change with the commissioning institution, encouraging an open dialogue on the type of change that the training is expected to bring about. This opens up space for including the principles of social justice, accountability and critical thinking at later phases in the training cycle. See for instance Yellow Window’s experience of liaising with institutions involved in implementing their training course, as outlined in the Annex.
- Clearly establishing the remit, scope and modality of the training. Feminist pedagogical principles should be at the forefront of such discussions to ensure that opportunities are created for developing a training curriculum that is consciously aligned with such principles. This involves practical questions such as budget, experience level of trainers, number of sessions, etc.

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71 Lombardo, E. and Mergaert, L. (2016) “Resistance in Gender Training and Mainstreaming Processes”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 67-68.

## Design and Development

This second phase of the training cycle is key for integrating feminist pedagogical principles. Such principles need to be a fundamental component of the curricular design process in order for trainers to be able to use feminist pedagogical practices in the training scenario. Critical pedagogical reflections on curriculum development highlight how the curriculum itself is a space of power, and that the curriculum reproduces social structures. As Tadeu da Silva argues, the important question is not “which knowledges are valid?”, but rather “which knowledges are *considered valid*?” (author’s translation).<sup>72</sup>

From a feminist perspective, McIntosh’s discussion of interactive phases for curricular revision is useful here. She conceives of the fourth stage of such a process as one in which people “invent their own ways of describing what they are finding ...invent new categories for experience, new ways of doing research, and new ways of learning.”<sup>73</sup> In discovering new material and new ways of sharing it, this form of curricular development reduces the distance between learners and facilitators. The latter “becomes less of an expert” while the former’s knowledge and experience is valued as a valuable source of knowledge.<sup>74</sup> A further, fifth stage “puts what we were taught to devalue and to value into a new revolutionary relation to each other”.

“A teacher doing work in Phase 5 develops inclusive rather than exclusive vision and realizes that many things hand together. A Phase 5 curriculum would help us to produce students who can see patterns of life in terms of systems of race, culture, caste, class, gender, religion, national origin, geographical location and other influences on life which we haven’t begun to name. At the same time, Phase 5 curriculum promises to produce students who can carry with them into public life the values of the private sphere, because inclusive learning allows them to value lateral functions rather than discredit them in the context of paid or public life.”<sup>75</sup>

In addition, the curriculum design and development process needs to pay attention to the development of critical thinking and open-mindedness. This may be particularly challenging in scenarios in which the training context emphasises “knowing definitions and replication”.<sup>76</sup> This is a pressure widely acknowledged by trainers and experts working in the field of gender equality, often working in contexts where there is a demand for precisely the easy answers and “homogenous neatness”<sup>77</sup> – in the form of ‘toolkits’ and ‘practical skills’ - that are antithetical to feminist pedagogical principles.

As Dasgupta argues,

“the critical epistemology of feminist studies challenges the very basis of cognition and the power of dominant knowledge systems, but it is often progressively simplified and made formulaic as it is disseminated among wider constituencies such as policy makers, development officials and community

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72 Silva, T.T. (2001) *Espacios de identidad: Nuevas Visiones sobre el curriculum*. Barcelona: Octaedro, p. 84-85.

73 McIntosh, P. (1983) "Interactive Phases of Curricular Re-Vision: A Feminist Perspective", *Wellesley Centers for Women Working Paper Series Paper No. 124*, p. 18-19.

74 Ibid.

75 McIntosh, P. (1983) "Interactive Phases of Curricular Re-Vision: A Feminist Perspective", *Wellesley Centers for Women Working Paper Series Paper No. 124*, p. 24.

76 Mukhopadhyay, M. and F. Wong (2007) "Introduction: Revisiting gender training. The making and remaking of gender knowledge", *Revisiting Gender Training: The Making and Remaking of Gender Knowledge – A Global Sourcebook*. Amsterdam: KIT Royal Tropical Institute, p. 23.

77 Miller, A. S. (2005) "Feminist pedagogies: Implications of a liberative praxis", in K. O. Wicker, A. S. Miller and M. W. Dube (Eds.) *Feminism New Testament Studies: Global and future perspectives*. New York: Routledge, p. 36.

members. The implementation of gender plans and programmes is frequently done in a positivist manner, without a critical examination of what does not work, which defeats the feminist agenda”.<sup>78</sup>

In a review of training manuals for gender equality in security sector reform, Prügl<sup>79</sup> finds a focus on conveying instrumental knowledge and technocratic skills. This “pedagogically and methodologically construct trainees as fixed targets in need of knowledge about standards, codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms; and trainers as conduits of that knowledge”.<sup>80</sup>

Curriculum design is therefore key to overcoming some of these obstacles in feminist pedagogical practice. **In constructing a feminist curriculum in training for gender equality, it is necessary to strike a balance between acknowledging these challenges and striving for transformative learning experiences which promote critical thinking among training participants.**

In practical terms, this involves:

- An understanding of the broader change process in which the training is embedded. As set out in the Working Paper on Theory of Change, training should be designed with a specific understanding the ways in which it is expected to contribute to gender-transformative change. Steps for achieving change and overcoming potential challenges and resistances should be explored at this stage.
- A strong focus on participation in the curriculum development process, involving the training participants as early in the process and as much as is feasible. New tools and methods of curriculum design are required that invoke participation from the training participants and commissioning institutions. Examples include ASI’s approach of a flexible schedule for the training in order to promote ownership by the participants (see Annex).
- A commitment to feminist epistemology, and understandings of the training scenario as one of a ‘circulation of knowledges on gender’, rather than a top-down process of ‘knowledge transfer’.<sup>81</sup> See, for example, the UN Women Training Centre/ITC ILO approach to creating a knowledge-base of shared “lessons learnt” (Annex).
- Ensuring that participants’ personal and professional experiences and knowledges on gender are integrated into the curriculum, in order to link personal experience with institutional structures of subordination.<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Yellow Window’s Action Learning Approach, as set out in the Annex.
- At the same time, acknowledging the power dynamics of different training scenarios, and integrating a ‘pedagogy for the privileged’ or “education for the privileged” – developed in the fields of Critical Masculinities Studies and Whiteness Studies – into the curriculum development process when appropriate.
- Building a range of feminist pedagogical methods and techniques in the training design, such as mind-body relationship activities (see PEGE-Promundo and DIMA-COMIBOL in the Annex) and participatory, experiential learning.

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78 Dasgupta, J. (2007) “Gender training: politics or development? A perspective from India,” in M. Mukhopadhyay and F. Wong (Eds.) *Revisiting Gender Training: The Making and Remaking of Gender Knowledge*. The Netherlands: KIT (Royal Tropical Institute), p. 35.

79 Prügl, E. (2010) “Gender training in the security sector: A power analysis of feminist knowledge,” Paper presented at conference on Gender, Peace and Security: Local Interpretations of International Norms, Hebrew University, May 2010.

80 Kelly, K. (2015) *Social Learning, Adult Learning and Feminist Pedagogies*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 13 and

81 Bustelo, M. Ferguson, L. and Forest, M. (2016) “Conclusions”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 157-174.

82 *SAGE Handbook of Communication and Instruction*, D. L. Fassett and J. T. Warren (Eds.), p. 415.

## Implementation

Integrating feminist pedagogical principles in the training scenario is highly dependent on the extent to which they have been included in the foregoing phases. In addition, the trainer selected to conduct the training may not necessarily have been involved with the previous phases. Furthermore, the space or potential for applying feminist pedagogical principles in the implementation of training may be squeezed by the delimitations of scope, resources and political dynamics of the specific context. **Trainers should maximise the potential of the training scenario to integrate feminist pedagogical principles, even when there are limitations and challenges to this.**

In practice, this requires highly skilled, experienced trainers, as set out in the Quality paper. Some practical points for integrating these principles include:

- In order to promote **participation**, the trainer can be positioned as a ‘feminist pedagogue’, working at all times in a dual role as facilitator and learner. This requires cultivating a ‘feminist classroom’, in which difference and diversity are celebrated whilst fostering a culture of debate and contestation.
- Trainers can avoid assuming the role of, but rather operate within more “nuanced, grounded, iterative and relationship-oriented understandings” of processes of knowledge transfer,<sup>83</sup> such as Promundo-UNFPA’s notion of a ‘circulation of knowledge’ (see Annex).
- **Validate and respect the diverse knowledges and experiences** of gender in the training scenario, whilst maintaining a commitment to feminist political principles and an over-arching agenda of transformation. This may involve the trainers’ acknowledging their own bias and positionality, as suggested by Yellow Window; or a process of “healing rituals” in trainings related to consciousness-raising in the experience of DIMA-COMIBOL (see Annex).
- Develop strategies to manage “the proliferation of experience-based knowledge claims and avoid the anti-democratic tendency to see experiential claims to know (especially to know about oppression) as sacrosanct”<sup>84</sup> Intersectionality is a key concept here for engaging the different experiences of participants through exploring their positionality in the multiple hierarchies of gender, class, ethnicity, age, nationality etc.
- In order to encourage **social justice, activism and accountability**, trainers need to manage deliberation and contestation in a skilful, effective way in order to harness resistances towards change and transformation.
- One tool for addressing differences of standpoints on gender is to get those on either side of the issue to take up the opposite position for the sake of a structured, formal debate. This allows for a distancing of positions, and can develop a more nuanced position of opposing views and experiences.<sup>85</sup> Such exercises also have the potential to invoke empathy, a key component of feminist learning processes. As set out in the Annex, both the ASI and the DIMA-COMIBOL training initiatives focussed on promoting women’s collective action, citizenship and leadership skills in order to overcome the gender-based inequalities and discrimination they face as individuals.

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83 Mukhopadhyay, M. and F. Wong (2007) “Introduction: Revisiting gender training. The making and remaking of gender knowledge”, *Revisiting Gender Training: The Making and Remaking of Gender Knowledge – A Global Sourcebook*. Amsterdam: KIT Royal Tropical Institute, The Netherlands, p. 13.

84 Sanchez-Casal, S. and MacDonald A. “Introduction: Feminist Reflections on the Pedagogical Relevance of Identity”, in S. Sanchez-Casal and A. MacDonald (Eds.), *Twenty-First-Century Feminist Classrooms: Pedagogies of Power and Difference*. , Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 2.

85 Jackson, P. T. (2016) “Safe spaces and hospitable classrooms”. *Relations International*. Available: <http://relationsinternational.com/safe-spaces-hospitable-classrooms/>

- Tools for developing **critical thinking and open-mindedness** in training scenarios include, for example, Promundo-UNFPA’s ‘ecological model’ of how gender norms are reinforced at multiple levels of society. Also notable is Yellow Window’s emphasis on an action learning approach, wherein group learning exercises invited participants to engage with one another and reflect critically on the training materials in an interactive manner, in order to reflect on the ways in which gender issues relate to their own research projects (see Annex).

## Evaluation

As argued extensively in the Evaluation Working Paper, evaluation tools and methods need to be integrated at all stages of the training cycle. Evaluation should be an integral part of both the Analysis and Planning, and Design and Development phases. In practical terms, integrating feminist pedagogical principles into evaluation entails:

- Paying attention to **participation** in the development of the evaluation methodology, and ensuring meaningful participation throughout the evaluation cycle. Good practices in evaluation, for example, include a peer review approach, in which facilitators attend each other’s training, as set out in the example from Yellow Window in the Annex.
- Allowing space for the **validation of personal experience** in the evaluation process through the inclusion of qualitative evaluation methods and a close match between the evaluation process and the experiences of the training, and the institution in which it is taking place. This is reflected in the UN Women Training Centre/ ITC-ILO training which used the experiences of participants as building blocks in a net of exchange, creating a knowledge-base of shared “lessons learnt”.
- Promoting **social justice, activism and accountability**, for example in asking participants to develop personal gender equality action plans setting out how they will build on the training in their daily work and life. These can be followed up collectively in a Community of Practice among the participants and other colleagues or peers. As with Yellow Window (see Annex), a reflexive evaluation process can allow for a greater focus on advocacy skills and power dynamics as the training curriculum develops over time.
- The evaluation process can contribute to the **development of critical thinking and open-mindedness** by including critical questions that invoke reflection on the part of training participants. This involves going beyond an assessment or learning or the immediate impact of training, and promoting a broad reflection on the power dynamics of the institution and broader context of the training.

If feminist pedagogical principles are integrated through all stages of the Training Cycle, from analysis to evaluation, the power dynamics and politics of each stage may be effectively addressed.

Based on the discussions in this paper, the next section outlines how feminist pedagogical principles may be applied to training for gender equality in a concrete manner. By looking at what practices can contribute to the realisation of the four key pedagogical principles in training, and how these can be practically integrated throughout the Training Cycle, the UN Women Training Centre hopes to make a significant contribution to pedagogical coherence in the field of transformative training for gender equality. The Statement presented below is intended as a first step, primed to generate debate around feminist pedagogies in training, towards ever more transformative outcomes in favour of gender equality.

# STATEMENT OF PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES FOR TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The UN Women Training Centre is committed to a feminist pedagogical approach, in order to maximise the potential for training for gender equality to contribute to transformative change. This is underpinned by a commitment to 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 characterized by increased social justice).<sup>86</sup>

Four key principles can be identified to guide the pedagogical work of training for gender equality:

- participatory learning;
- validation of personal experience;
- encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability; and
- development of critical thinking and open-mindedness.<sup>87</sup>

The UN Women Training Centre works from these four core principles. In practice, this means that

*In order to promote participatory learning, training for gender equality:*

- Takes seriously the power dynamics of the training scenario, including paying attention to intersectional inequalities, and strives to overcome these
- Engages non-hierarchical modes of teaching and learning
- Involves openness on the part of the trainer to opportunities for mutual learning and self-questioning<sup>88</sup>
- Places a strong process on participation throughout the training cycle, from curriculum development through to evaluation
- Supports trainers to engage in the dual roles of facilitator and learner by positioning themselves as ‘feminist pedagogues’

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86 Manicom, A. (1992) “Feminist Pedagogy: Transformations, Standpoints, and Politics”, *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17(3), p. 366-367.

87 Manicom, A. (1992) “Feminist Pedagogy: Transformations, Standpoints, and Politics”, *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17(3), p. 366-367.

88 Kunz, R. (2016) “Windows of Opportunity, Trojan Horses, and Waves of Women on the Move: De-colonizing the Circulation of Feminist Knowledges through Metaphors?”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 150-151.



- Ensures that the training environment adheres to the principles of the ‘feminist classroom’. In online training, pays particular attention to student voice, participation, and negotiation<sup>89</sup>

***In order to ensure that personal experience is validated, training for gender equality:***

- Constructs a learning environment that promotes shared and deliberative learning
- Acknowledges the politics of knowledge on gender, and works towards decolonising feminist knowledge
- Integrates participants’ personal and professional experiences and knowledges on gender into the curriculum and evaluation process
- Encourages participants and trainers to reveal their biases and blindnesses in relation to gender, in order to make these visible and open to deliberation
- Promotes a circulation of knowledges rather than a top-down process of knowledge transfer
- Draws on the participants’ different locations in intersecting hierarchies to help them explore their own positionality in relation to power dynamics in the organisation and broader social structures
- Ensures that online learning environments respect experience-based knowledge and encourage students to situate and apply knowledge in a way that is personally meaningful and relevant<sup>90</sup>
- Develops strategies for challenging and tackling beliefs that are antithetical to gender equality, particularly when training the privileged or powerful

***In order to encourage social understanding and activism, training for gender equality:***

- Ensures that training for gender equality is always considered a ‘political act’
- Applies a flexible approach while maintaining an overarching commitment to transformative social change
- Has a clear idea about the change or transformation to which the training is expected to contribute, and is embedded in a broader Theory of Change
- Employs trainers skilled in managing deliberation and contestation in order to harness resistances towards social change
- Engages participants in active restructuring of their existing KDA system, not merely offer new factual knowledge. That is, training is most likely to evoke change if it increases *knowledge* and the *desire* to learn, while providing advocacy skills or access to different networks of knowers (*ability* to challenge gender norms)<sup>91</sup>
- Encourages and supports participants to be accountable for gender equality and to become gender advocates within their organisation

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89 Kirkup, G., Schmitz, S., Kotkamp, E., Rommes, E. and Hiltunen, A.M. (2010). “Towards a Feminist Manifesto for E-Learning: Principles to Inform Practices”, In S. Booth, S. Goodman and G. Kirkup (Eds.), *Gender issues in learning and working with information technology: Social constructs and cultural contexts*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, p. 256. Available: <http://www.irma-international.org/viewtitle/42500/>

90 Lather, P. (2006). The absent presence: Patriarchy, capitalism, and the nature of teacher work. In E. F. Jr. Provenzo (Ed.), *Critical issues in education: An anthology of readings*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 154-167; Sanchez-Casal, S. and Macdonald, A. (Eds.) (2002) *Twenty-first century feminist classrooms: Pedagogies of identity and difference*. New York: Palgrave.

91 UN Women Training Centre (forthcoming) *Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre; Marx Ferree, M. (N/D) *Training for gender equality as a source of organisational change*. Unpublished background paper, p. 10-11.

- Develops practical tools to encourage activism in e-learning scenarios. E.g. buddy system, personal gender equality plan of action etc.

***In order to develop critical thinking and open-mindedness, training for gender equality:***

- Allows space for ambiguity and resists ‘easy answers’ or a focus on conveying instrumental knowledge and technocratic skills
- Focuses on increasing participants’ Desire to learn about gender and their Ability to challenge gender inequality by fostering critical thinking in the training scenario<sup>92</sup>
- Encourages participants to be open-minded in their engagement with the perspectives of other participants, and support them to take these seriously
- Engages training commissioners to create a space for critical thinking to be put into practice after the training
- Involves participants in structured debate which helps develop more nuanced understandings of opposing views and experiences
- Includes critical questions that invoke reflection on the part of participants and commissioners during the evaluation process

In addition to the broad application of these four principles, the UN Women Training Centre highlights the importance of integrating a feminist pedagogical approach into all stages of the training cycle. Here are some of the key questions to be considered:

**Checklist: Feminist Pedagogies in the Training Cycle**

***Analysis: assessing feasibility and learning needs***

- Is the scope of the training sufficient to be able to integrate the four principles of feminist pedagogies? Has the remit, scope and modality of the training been clearly established to ensure opportunities for developing a training curriculum that is consciously aligned with feminist pedagogical principles?
- What can a diagnostic assessment of the institution and its needs in terms of gender equality tell us about the power dynamics at work? How can participants’ existing knowledge and experience on gender be assessed?
- Does the learning assessment draw on the principles of participation and validation of personal experience, based on best practice in the field?
- What kind of change or transformation is this training intended to bring about, or contribute to? Has this been openly discussed with the training commissioners?

***Planning: recruiting participants and facilitators, organising logistics, and conceptualize technical content***

- What logistical aspects need to be taken into consideration to ensure the construction of a ‘feminist classroom’ for the training environment?
- How can terms of reference for trainers be designed to ensure that feminist pedagogical principles will be respected in the training environment?

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<sup>92</sup> UN Women Training Centre (forthcoming) *Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre; Marx Ferree, M. (N/D) *Training for gender equality as a source of organisational change*. Unpublished background paper, p. 10-11.

- How can the technical content and learning objectives be consciously aligned with feminist pedagogical principles?

***Design: constructing the outline of the training***

- What particular aspects of power and intersectional hierarchies need to be taken into account in the design of the training? How can we integrate a pedagogy for the privileged into the training scenario to respond to these power differences?
- How can we ensure that the course design respects a circulation of knowledges rather than top-down knowledge transfer?
- Is there space for a participatory approach to developing the objectives and outline of the training? At what stage of the process are learners brought in to review and offer feedback on the course content and approach?

***Development: content and methods***

- What is best practice in feminist pedagogies for this kind (length, modality, objectives, etc.) of training?
- What kinds of activities and methods are most likely to lead to an increase in participants' Knowledge, Desire and Ability to address gender inequality?
- Based on the learning assessment, how can participants' already existing knowledge and experience be built into the course design?

***Implementation: running the training***

- How can the trainer assume the dual role of facilitator and learner by taking on the mantle of a feminist pedagogue?
- What preparation can be done by the trainer/s in advance of the training to construct a 'feminist classroom'? What kind of introduction to the training can best facilitate a feminist pedagogical learning environment?
- How can different understandings of gender and gender equality be articulated in the training scenario? How can participants' knowledge and experience of gender be validated whilst maintaining a commitment to feminist political principles and an over-arching agenda of transformation?
- How can deliberation and contestation be managed effectively to harness resistances towards change and transformation? How can power dynamics be addressed in the training scenario in a way that respects difference and challenges privilege?

***Evaluation: monitoring, evaluation and follow-up***

- What evaluation processes are best suited to measuring how training contributes to feminist outcomes? What kinds of evaluation criteria best match the four principles of feminist pedagogies?
- What kinds of follow up activities are required to support participants to implement the expected changes? How can communities of learners be created and supported to encourage the implementation of institutional change?
- How can feminist pedagogical practices be developed and documented in a collective and reflexive manner? How can the process of documenting such practices be inclusive of practitioners from a range of backgrounds?

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. Nevertheless feminist pedagogical principles should act as an overarching framework for the diverse range of training for gender equality. This Statement is intended as a call for practitioners, trainers and experts to explore how such principles and practices can be applied in different institutions and contexts across the field of training for gender equality.

# ANNEX: EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES IN FEMINIST PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

*Agribusiness Systems International (ASI) (an affiliate of ACDI/VOCA)*

## “Gender, Rights, and Collective Action Training”, India

- **Participants as active agents in the construction of knowledge.** While building trainees’ critical consciousness of the structures underlying gender norms and power relations, the initiative did not enforce its own specific understanding of gender equality on participants. Instead, it asked them to analyse situations or concepts and explain what they thought, and what they learned from the experiences that others shared with the group. In this way, the approach encouraged them to analyse, reflect, ask questions, disagree, challenge others, and question themselves. There was an emphasis on the participants’ “ownership” of the training. They decided when to have a break or watch a film, rather than passively accepting a schedule imposed in a top-down manner.
- **Inclusive and context- sensitive approach to training design.** Project staff, partners, and trainers jointly selected content and activities for inclusion in the training curriculum, informed by their knowledge of the local context and culture. For instance, as their cultural background prevented them from interacting freely in the presence of men, the training was developed exclusively for female trainees and delivered by female trainers. This was intended to create a space in which participants felt safe and comfortable enough to share their own experiences, and reflect on how gender norms affect their lives.
- **Skilled trainers with local knowledge.** The trainers, Indian gender experts who have worked extensively in rural areas, were able to “act on their feet” by citing locally relevant examples. Their experience helped them understand the emotional and psychological change trainees underwent during the training. The trainers stressed the importance of “empathy” with the participants; facilitating rather than lecturing; openness to learning from the trainees; approachability; and being able to connect with the trainees. For instance, they often participated in informal discussions with participants after the formal training sessions.
- **Commitment to collective action.** The training was premised on the idea that women organised in collective groups are better able to overcome the gender-based inequalities and discrimination they face as individuals. Key to this is the development of a cadre of women leaders with the skills to lead others to take on new roles and overcome barriers. This was explicitly integrated into the training, for example by making the course residential to allow women the space to develop the necessary relationships for collective action.

Concern Universal

## “Gender and equality mainstreaming in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene project”, Malawi

- **Deconstruct power relations related to knowledge and putting the participants at the centre of the learning process.** This involved participants reflecting on: gender norms and relations in their personal and professional lives; their relationships with other fe/male colleagues and women and men at the community level; and on other characteristics and their connections to gender. In this spirit, the facilitator herself reflected on her age, being a rather young professional in the Malawian context.

- **Horizontal approach.** The facilitator aimed at not portraying herself as a gender expert, or in this particular case, being intimidated by older participants based on hierarchical age structures in Malawian society. As such, the facilitator focused on involving all participants in discussions and reflections. She also recognized that women tend to speak less in mixed groups in this national context, and therefore gave ample time for the females' participants to make their voices heard.

*DIMA-COMIBOL (Environmental Department of the Bolivian Mining Corporation)*

**“Training and Capacity Development of Community Reporters with a Social and Gender Focus”, Bolivia**

- **Knowledge and learning connected to the human body and emotions.** Emotions were incorporated into the learning process, as a means of confronting how we see, do, and ultimately value learning. Actions involve emotions, bodies, corporal habits and internal capacities, as well as the “value” of these actions. The learning process also connects to “first being, then knowing/experiencing based on our being and finally doing.”
- **Consciousness-raising.** This approach values women’s personal stories and lives in an initial process to empower and enhance consciousness. Therefore, the training took place behind “closed doors”, with only the facilitators and the women present in order to increase women’s confidence to speak in public and prepare for successive modules where public speeches in the local community and public events became part of their field exercises. The first two modules focused on exercises to “heal women’s wounds”, which can also be found at the heart of the feminist consciousness-raising process’ “healing ritual”.
- **Building on consciousness-raising for social action.** The participants took part in reporting exercises in a public environment; participation in Public Hearings; and participatory budget events and audits. This involved them both as community reporters and as women citizens entitled to make their voice heard. The intention was that women’s continued involvement in politics would lead to equitable and sustained development and greater gender equality.

*Promundo*

**“Portal for Gender Equality in Schools (PEGE)”, Brazil and “Gender Transformative Programmes and Approaches in Eastern Europe and Central Asia” (in partnership with UNFPA EECA), Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

- **Mind-body relationship activities.** People learn not only with their heads, but also with their bodies, i.e. with their emotions, behaviours, aesthetic sensibilities, etc.<sup>93</sup> Emphasis is placed on the autonomous participation of individuals towards understanding oppression. This is perceived to be essential and cannot be achieved solely through the provision of information. (Portal for Gender Equality in Schools - PEGE)
- **Ecological Model.** Conceptual framework to guide gender equality professionals in looking at how gender norms are reinforced at multiple levels of society. This enabled the training to offer a more in-depth understanding of how men and women are influenced at various levels of society. Gender transformation was framed as something which cuts across multiple dimensions in order to encourage interventions with multiple components. The approach hinged on trainees’ active participation in the learning and knowledge construction process. Recognising that learning comes from critical reflection, engagement and dialogue, trainees were encouraged to reflect on gender and its intersections with cross-cutting issues and structures in the region. (Promundo’s collaboration with UNFPA)
- **Participants as active agents of change.** Participants constructed knowledge alongside facilitators, implying a circulation of knowledge, rather than merely its transfer from trainer to trainee. The trainers facilitated this process, drawing out critical reflections by digging deeper into the “whys” behind gender, power, privilege, and

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93 Freire, P. (1998) *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*. Lanham, USA: Rowman & Littlefield.

equality. Taking participants out of their comfort zones in this way was a key part of the approach in order to prompt deeper contemplation. Examining power relations, and how these intersect with gender, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and age, etc. was considered the key first step in understanding why and how to change unequal gender norms. (Promundo's collaboration with UNFPA)

*UN Women Training Centre/ITC ILO*

#### **"Blended Course 'Empowering UN system Gender Focal Points'", Global**

- **Attention to power relations and how these can influence training.** This course ascribed valued the process of learning itself and sought to negotiate power-hierarchies between trainers and trainees to avoid reinforcing them. For example, it addressed the power dynamics present in online settings, which afford trainees a degree of anonymity but may lack direct personal contact, by ensuring that expert online facilitators, available and responsive to participants' concerns.
- **Experienced, open and approachable trainers.** The fact that they were senior trainers was considered important for securing their legitimacy in the eyes of trainees, adapting the sessions to trainees' needs, and building relationships of trust between participants and facilitators. Another instance concerns the selection of UN Women staff as participants for the "Training of Trainers" initiative, who were identified as "key strategic actors". To avoid reinforcing hierarchies of power, the Training Centre built on collaboration with other UN entities, such as UN Women field offices, to inform the selection process.
- **Training as a horizontal, dialectic learning process.** The experiences of participants were used as building blocks in a net of sharing and exchange that the training aspired to encourage. Trainees learnt both from their own experiences as well as those of others, creating a knowledge-base of shared "lessons learnt".

*Yellow Window*

#### **"Gender in EU-funded Research (Toolkit and Training Programme)", Europe**

- **Peer review approach.** This involved facilitators attending each other's trainings, especially in the initial phases of the initiative. They did so both to support one another, for instance by assisting participants during group exercises, as well as to observe and facilitate quality control. Following each session, the team discussed these observations and decided how best to adapt future sessions in order to make the best of each one-day intervention.
- **Adaptation over time.** This allowed for a development from a "research community format", involving work on actual documents, to a "multiplier format", focusing on advocacy skills and dealing with resistance. This allowed for a more political approach to the training.
- **Action learning approach.** In addition to group exercises, participants were invited to discuss their own research projects and how gender issues relate to these. The knowledge they gained by engaging with one another and critically reflecting on the training materials in an interactive manner was central to the learning process. Interactive learning techniques were selected as they were deemed "the most efficient and effective method for adult learning" and given Yellow Window's understanding that "learning can only be optimized if trainees participate actively, and thus say and do themselves during the training what they are supposed to learn."
- **Acknowledgement of political bias.** The facilitators were guided by the understanding that denying bias will not be productive. The best possible strategy for a trainer is to address your own bias make it work for you. If a trainer admits to and illustrates her bias, trainer and trainee step out of an oppositional relationship and chances are higher trainees will also start to recognise their own biases.

**UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION  
DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND  
THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A  
GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND  
GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED  
TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON  
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.