

WORKING PAPER

QUALITY IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY



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UN WOMEN TRAINING CENTRE

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UN WOMEN TRAINING CENTRE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

To date, no consensus exists over what constitutes “quality” in training for gender equality, or what kinds of assurance mechanisms might be put in place for guaranteeing quality in this field. A range of key stakeholders have repeatedly highlighted this issue as essential for the continuing improvement of training for gender equality. The Joint Statement of UN Women’s Expert Group Meeting on Training for Gender Equality in Santo Domingo in August 2015 recommended:

“Strengthening quality assurance measures and develop guidelines on training for gender equality, continuing to engage with ongoing work on evidence and theory-based practices”

As such, the **objective of this paper** is to explore the key elements of such a process and propose some criteria, mechanisms and guiding principles for broader debate among key stakeholders in the field of training for gender equality. The purpose is not to drive a process of quality criteria and assurance mechanisms, but rather to **explore what key elements** these might include. The discussion encapsulates three interrelated aspects of quality in training for gender equality – content and knowledge; methodologies; and trainers. This paper is one of a series of Working Papers commissioned by the UN Women Training Centre. It can either be read as a stand-alone paper or in conjunction with the papers on Theory of Change, Pedagogies and Evaluation.

In this paper, we compare the UN Women Training Centre’s work on quality with other contemporary initiatives in the field of training for gender equality in order to develop a coherent approach to quality criteria and mechanisms. Throughout the paper, attention is paid to the Training Cycle and typologies, to ensure that all aspects of training for gender equality are integrated into the notion of quality and assurance mechanisms. The paper is structured around four key themes:

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

The first section of the paper charts the development of the field of training for gender equality and highlights that there are currently no explicit principles or ethics guiding practice. It takes stock of the current academic literature on gender expertise and training for gender equality, along with some ideas about constructing a *feminist approach* to knowledge transfer. This discussion contextualises the more pragmatic focus of the paper within broader, ongoing debates on quality in the literature. This is useful for ensuring that the process of developing criteria and mechanisms is situated within critical debates, and that any such process is able to speak to these broader ethical and political concerns.

Following this analysis, the paper goes on to explore some over-arching quality criteria for training for gender equality. First, three approaches to quality criteria from across the field are presented - the UN Women Training Centre Quality Assurance Criteria, Gender Manifesto 2006 and the Madrid Declaration. Drawing on the insights gathered from these different approaches – as well as the broader themes outlined in this paper – a number of over-arching quality criteria are identified, which are then elaborated in detail.

In order to embed quality *criteria* in the practice of training for gender equality, it is necessary to develop a number of *mechanisms*. The concern here is more explicitly on the practical aspects. It is useful to use the training cycle as a guide for this, as it reminds us of the cyclical nature of training and ensures a focus on process as well as outcomes. In the paper, a number of cross-cutting mechanisms are proposed.

The paper then goes on to outline in detail the different stages of the Training Cycle, discussing which quality assurance mechanisms can be applied for each stage.

“As gender expertise is spreading and establishing itself, gender experts and academics alike are challenged to advance knowledge on how to wield governmental power in a feminist way, and release the transformative potential of feminist knowledge transfer.” (Prügl 2016)

After setting out some *criteria* and *mechanisms* for quality assurance in training for gender equality, the paper then turns to reflect on some of the challenges of developing such processes for the field. Following a detailed analysis of such concerns, a number of recommendations are proposed for any future process of developing quality guidelines and mechanisms in training for gender equality:

- Adopt an intersectional approach
- Promote the decolonisation of knowledge on gender
- Pay attention to inequalities already existing within the field of training for gender equality
- Develop a process that is encouraging and supportive of bringing new actors into the field
- Focus on peer evaluation as a methodology for reviewing and evaluating quality
- Secure funding and human resources to develop and follow up on this process

Finally, the paper presents a Statement:

Statement on Quality Criteria and Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Training for Gender Equality:

To date, there has been no clear agreement across the field as to what quality criteria and quality assurance mechanisms for training for gender equality might entail. For the UN Women Training Centre, quality matters in training for gender equality, because:

- Better quality training leads to better gender equality outcomes
- Training that adheres to an agreed set of principles is more likely to contribute to gender-transformative processes
- The field as a whole can benefit from an inclusive, on-going approach to quality

Drawing on a number of sources – academic literature, previous collective initiatives in the field, and the UN Women Training Centre’s Quality Criteria – we propose the following core set of over-arching **Quality Criteria for Training for Gender Equality**:

- Training for Gender Equality is part of a feminist political project of transformation of unequal gendered power relations

1 Prügl, E. (2016) “How to Wield Feminist Power”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 39.

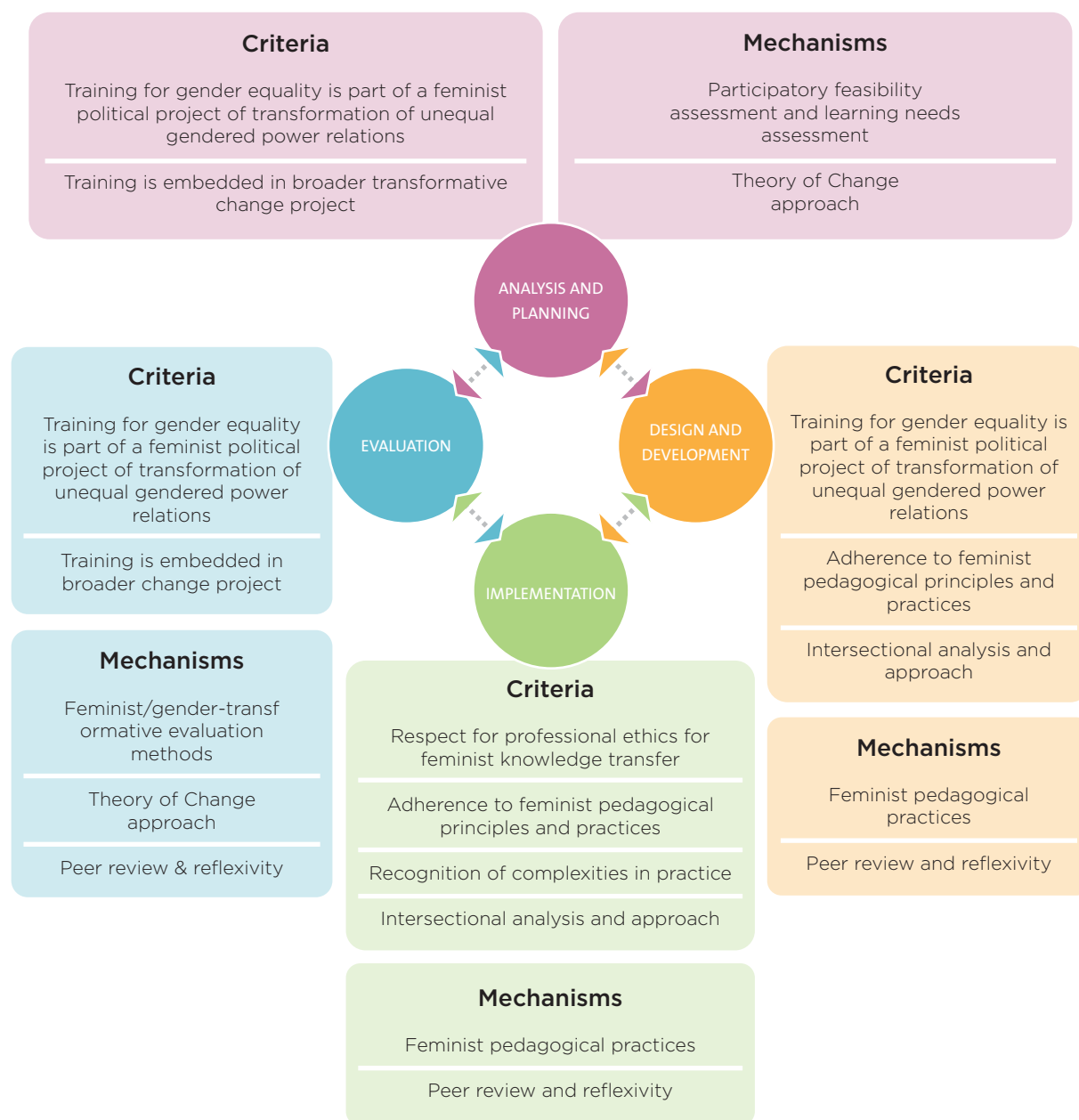
- Respect for professional ethics for feminist knowledge transfer
- Training is embedded training in a broader gender-transformative change project
- Recognition of complexities in practice
- Adherence to feminist pedagogical principles and practices
- Intersectional analysis and approach

In order to ensure that training for gender equality meets these criteria, a number of **Quality Assurance Mechanisms** can be employed. For example, some cross-cutting mechanisms that can be applied across different stages of the Training Cycle include:

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

The diagram below demonstrates how these Criteria and Mechanisms interact with each other – and how they are embedded in the different stages of the Training Cycle (see Training Manual for detailed description).

FIGURE A – THEORY OF CHANGE AND FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES AS BUILDING BLOCKS FOR QUALITY TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY



The UN Women Training Centre recognises challenges involved in developing quality criteria for training for gender equality. This Statement is intended as a call for practitioners, trainers and experts to collectively explore how Quality Criteria and Quality Assurance Mechanisms could be developed for different institutions and contexts across the field of training for gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

To date, no consensus exists over what constitutes “quality” in training for gender equality, or what kinds of assurance mechanisms might be put in place for guaranteeing quality in this field. A range of key stakeholders have repeatedly highlighted this issue as essential for the continuing improvement of training for gender equality. The Joint Statement of UN Women’s Expert Group Meeting on Training for Gender Equality in Santo Domingo in August 2015 recommends:

“Strengthening quality assurance measures and develop guidelines on training for gender equality, continuing to engage with ongoing work on evidence and theory-based practices”

In an online discussion coordinated by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in 2013, participants identified three main reasons why quality assurance mechanisms are needed in training for gender equality:

- to improve the quality of training;
- to ensure that training leads to better gender equality outcomes; and
- to improve the process of commissioning training.²

The question of quality in training for gender equality is also highlighted in the academic literature on the field, where a number of concerns are raised. These include the non-feminist characteristics of some gender work³; the de-politicisation of feminist knowledge transfer⁴; and the lack of a core set of ethical principles to guide training for gender equality.

As such, the **objective of this paper** is to explore the key elements of such a process and propose some criteria, mechanisms and guiding principles for broader debate among key stakeholders in the field of training for gender equality. The purpose is not to drive a process of quality criteria and assurance mechanisms, but rather to **explore what key elements** these might include. The discussion encapsulates three interrelated aspects of quality in training for gender equality – content and knowledge; methodologies; and trainers. This paper is one of a series of Working Papers commissioned by the Training Centre. It can either be read as a stand-alone paper or in conjunction with the papers on Theory of Change, Pedagogies and Evaluation.

The work of the UN Women Training Centre is grounded in a series of **quality assurance criteria** and **quality assurance mechanisms**:

2 EIGE (2014) *Quality assurance mechanisms for gender training in the European Union: Reflections from the online discussion*. Vilnius: European Institute for Gender Equality, p.5. Available: <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0113604ENC.PDF>

3 Ferguson, L. (2015) “This Is Our Gender Person”: The Messy Business of Working as a Gender Expert in International Development”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 17(3).

4 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*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

UN Women Training Centre Quality Assurance Criteria

- Social transformation
- Meeting learning needs
- Transformative learning
- Gender equitable and diverse
- Sustainability
- Innovation and creativity

Quality Assurance Mechanisms

- Feasibility assessment
- Learning needs assessment
- Peer review process
- Consultant/company recruitment and selection process
- Piloting
- Evaluation

In this paper, we compare the Training Centre’s work on quality with other contemporary initiatives in the field of training for gender equality in order to develop a coherent approach to quality criteria and mechanisms. Throughout the paper, attention is paid to the Training Cycle and typologies, to ensure that all aspects of training for gender equality are integrated into the notion of quality and assurance mechanisms. The paper is structured around four key themes:

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

The final section of the paper presents a ‘**Statement on Quality Criteria and Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Training for Gender Equality**’. This working paper is intended to promote debate and discussion among the Training Centre and relevant key stakeholders in the field – from organisations which deliver training for gender equality, to training commissioners and trainers themselves. The ultimate aim is to develop and implement quality assurance mechanisms in training for gender equality which will enhance the standard of training delivered around the world towards the ultimate goal of transformational gender equality.

WHY QUALITY MATTERS IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

“The potential of gender training for changing power relationships, challenging gender stereotypes and revisiting organizational cultures very much depends on the existence of minimum quality standards in terms of methodology and theoretical background, which have not been agreed upon so far.”⁵ (Bustelo, Ferguson and Forest 2016)

To date, the field of training for gender equality has not developed a comprehensive process for defining and developing quality guidelines. Attempts to develop a professionalisation or standardisation of training for gender equality have been somewhat sporadic, and undertaken on a country-by-country basis. In France, for example, the Women’s Rights Ministry established a working group on minimum quality criteria in gender training in 2013, aimed at producing a national framework and also a public label for gender equality trainers. This has not yet materialised, but has triggered debates around quality standards for gender equality training.⁶ Similar discussions have emerged in other countries - Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the UK – but have primarily taken the format of sharing experiences and resources, rather than any formal processes.⁷ Further efforts to develop notions of quality have been taken by politically engaged groups of practitioners in the field, as discussed in more detail below.

As argued throughout this paper, the lack of quality criteria and assurance mechanisms for training for gender equality matters because:

- Better quality training leads to better gender equality outcomes
- Training that adheres to an agreed set of principles is more likely to contribute to gender-transformative processes
- The field as a whole can benefit from an inclusive, on-going approach to quality.

Training for gender equality can be understood as a ‘profession in the making’⁸, lacking any formal processes of certification or standardisation. There is currently no comprehensive data on trainers working in the field of gender equality, although a number of studies have attempted to capture this information. The OPERA Conference held in Madrid in February 2011 brought together nearly 140 trainers, commissioners and experts, the

5 Bustelo, M., Ferguson, L. and Forest M. (2016) “Introduction”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 7.

6 Ibid.

7 OPERATeam (2010) *OPERA Final Report Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice*, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.). QUING: Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies Integrated Project. Available: https://www.iwm.at/projects/quiring/www.quing.eu/files/results/final_opera_report.pdf EIGE (2013) *Mapping gender training in the European Union and Croatia*. Vilnius: European Institute for Gender Equality. Available: <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/mapping-gender-training-european-union-and-croatia-synthesis-report>

8 Bustelo, M., Ferguson, L. and Forest M. (2016) “Introduction”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 7.

first international conference on training for gender equality as a global issue.⁹ This conference demonstrated the diverse characteristics of trainers, including their specific areas of expertise; educational background; working languages; professional background; and political identities, etc.

These differences can be seen in the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) database of 160 trainers. An analysis of the database¹⁰ revealed the following key points:

- Two-thirds of trainers are affiliated with a private company, an NGO or a university;
- The majority of trainers hold advanced degrees, yet the fields of study vary greatly – from psychology through political science to clinical sexology; and
- Trainers followed different paths to achieve their current level of expertise and qualification, often dependent on the availability of gender training opportunities in trainers' countries of origin.

A survey of 188 gender experts conducted by the Graduate Institute in Geneva¹¹ found that, of those surveyed:

- 92% have graduate degrees;
- 72% had PhDs (mostly in social sciences with very few in gender/women's studies);
- 60% of the respondents self-reported as 'feminist', while 40% did not; and
- Participants primarily reported that their knowledge on how to integrate a gender perspective was gained from their place of work.

“As gender expertise is spreading and establishing itself, gender experts and academics alike are challenged to advance knowledge on how to wield governmental power in a feminist way, and release the transformative potential of feminist knowledge transfer.”¹² (Prügl 2016)

Although this survey was not explicitly targeted at trainers, but rather *experts*, 79% of whom worked for the UN, it helps to give a flavour of the field of training for gender equality. Of particular interest or concern for our purposes are the second two points, which need to be taken into consideration in the process of developing quality guidelines and mechanisms:

- How do we approach the issue of trainers for gender equality who do not identify as feminist?
- How do we tackle the ways in which institutional cultures may shape and influence trainers in non-feminist ways?

These concerns over a lack of a coherent approach to quality are echoed in the literature on training for gender equality, and gender expertise more broadly conceived. In the Introduction to their book on the politics of 'feminist knowledge transfer', Bustelo, Ferguson and Forest argue that such a process is “inherently political,

9 QUING (2011) “Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice: An international event for practitioners, experts and commissioners in Gender+ training, Centro de Estudios de Gestión, Complutense University, Madrid, February 3-4, 2011.”

10 EIGE (2013) *Mapping gender training in the European Union and Croatia. Vilnius: European Institute for Gender Equality*. Available: <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/mapping-gender-training-european-union-and-croatia-synthesis-report>

11 Kunz, R; Prügl, E; Thompson, H (2019) “Gender expertise in global governance: contesting the boundaries of a field”, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, Volume 2, Number 1, February 2019, pp. 23-40(18)

12 Prügl, E. (2016) “How to Wield Feminist Power”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 39.

dynamic and contested”.¹³ They set out a number of characteristics of what a *feminist* approach to knowledge transfer might entail:

1. An understanding that gender inequality is *structural* and *systemic*, and a capacity to use ‘gender lenses’ or ‘feminist glasses’ in knowledge transfer scenarios.
2. Transfer of knowledge which aims at being *transformative*, that is, knowledge use should aim not only at understanding better, but also at changing the world, fighting against social injustices, and redressing unequal power relations.
3. Feminist knowledge understood as situated knowledge – filtered through the standpoints of different knowers, in which some ways are privileged over others. This implies the acknowledgement of the plurality of feminist *knowledges*.
4. An explicit acknowledgement of the inherently *political* nature of the contexts in which such knowledge is transferred and of feminist knowledge transfer as a site for contestation.
5. A key focus on *reflexivity* in order to acknowledge of biases and limitations and allow for the recognition of multiple perspectives.¹⁴

While the concern of this paper is not to propose or develop professional standards for training for gender equality, the above discussion contextualises the more pragmatic focus on quality within broader debates in the literature. This is useful for ensuring that the process of developing criteria and mechanisms is situated within critical debates, and that any such process is able to speak to these broader ethical and political concerns. As such, the Statement on Quality Criteria and Quality Assurance Mechanisms below is informed by these broader debates and strives to foster discussion around how quality in training for gender equality may be usefully developed.

¹³ Bustelo, M., Ferguson, L. and Forest M. (2016) “Introduction”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

IDENTIFYING QUALITY IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY (CRITERIA)

While there are no universally agreed quality criteria across the field of training for gender equality, a number of different approaches can be identified – the UN Women Training Centre Quality Assurance Criteria, Gender Manifesto 2006 and the Madrid Declaration. It should be noted that while the Gender Manifesto and Madrid Declaration are directed at the field in the broadest sense, the UN Women Training Centre’s criteria are focussed specifically on the work of the Training Centre. Nevertheless, it is useful to compare and contrast the different approaches in order to draw out the overlaps and tensions between these, with the overall aim of improving quality criteria in training for gender equality. The focus in this part of the paper is on *criteria*, while *mechanisms* are discussed in more detail below.

UN Women Training Centre Quality Assurance Criteria

The Training Centre has developed six Quality Assurance Criteria. Each criterion is accompanied by a series of indicators, which draw on the different stages of the Training Cycle (see Training Manual for more details).

Social transformation. We are guided by the view that our work has to contribute to the achievement of practical and strategic needs of diverse women and girls in order to affect social transformation. We are committed to supporting the realisation of global normative frameworks that promote gender equality and human rights for all, particular for women and girls.

Meeting learning needs. We emphasise the importance of creating and delivering training that meets the specific learning needs of diverse women and men. This includes targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that support broader institutional and social transformation towards gender equality. These questions are addressed in detail in the paper on training and education for gender equality. The entire training cycle should be guided by these learning needs and we are committed to allocating the time and resources needed to comprehensively analyse these needs and adapt the training to meet these needs.

Gender-transformative learning. We have adopted a learning-centred approach to training that focuses on building a participatory, participant-driven, empowering and transformative learning process. We match the training content with creative adult learning methods in order to build the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that are included in the learning outcomes. We follow gender-transformative learning principles with the objective of together affecting individual behavioural change that will drive larger institutional and social transformations. This means that learning occurs in the spirit of participation and that training facilitators actively share power so that knowledge, skills and attitudes are created *for, by, and with* the participants. Issues of change are discussed more substantively in the Theory of Change paper.

Gender equitable and diverse. We are committed to ensuring that our training programmes and products are gender equitable and support diversity. We are serving the global community, thus we are accountable to promote and celebrate diversity, including diversity of learning needs, positive practices, and identities. This includes acknowledging power and privilege and striving for diversity of representation, knowledge and skills throughout the training cycle. We have adopted an intersectional approach to training for gender equality, which

illuminates the interconnections between various forms of inequality and oppression including sexism, racism, xenophobia, classism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and others. We also take active measures to ensure the participation of marginalised/underrepresented groups as trainers and participants, which in training for gender equality includes men and boys.

Sustainability. Our training programmes and products are developed and delivered keeping in mind the applicability, usefulness, and relevance for participants in order to create sustainable transformations in attitudes and behaviours. We think of training as one part of a longer capacity building process so as to encourage on-going post-training support for participants to implement what they have learned. Once back on the job, in order for participants to implement the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they have learned it is also vital that they receive support and encouragement from their supervisors, colleagues and the general work environment. Sustainable training for gender equality should therefore be part of a broader gender equality strategy or process that includes interconnected transformations in policy, structure, personnel, infrastructure, budgeting and other relevant areas.

Innovation and creativity. Experiential and participatory learning for diverse women and men can be enhanced through employing various innovative, creative, and state-of-the-art tools, techniques, approaches and methods. With innovative and creative approaches to training, learning outcomes can be achieved more effectively and efficiently.

Gender Manifesto 2006

Developed by a group of trainers and researchers working in the field of gender equality in Germany, the *Gender Manifesto*¹⁵ is concerned with “a danger of preserving, or even reinforcing, the mainstream gender order through Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Training”. In order to overcome this, the Manifesto proposes a series of “theoretical and methodological premises and the standards for professional practice derived from them”, with the aim of contributing to quality development in training and consultancy for gender equality. In terms of theoretical premises, they suggest making:

“a paradoxical approach to Gender the starting point for professional action; that is, to use Gender as an analytical category in order to overcome Gender as a classification category” – or “using gender to undo gender.”

This involves using a “three-step strategy” from construction to reconstruction to deconstruction, to *make gender analysis itself the subject of the analysis*.

A number of methodological premises for “a reflecting Gender- practice” are offered:

Applying systematically the three-steps: Construction-reconstruction-deconstruction

- Identifying dual constructions of gender
- Reconstructing gender distinctions instead of assuming gender differences
- Tracing down the historical, cultural, and political conditions that lead to Gender
- Highlighting the multiple contexts and interplays of Gender with other social categories
- Opening the “gender corset“

15 “Gender Manifesto: A call for critical reflection on Gender-oriented capacity building and consultancy.” (2006) Available: http://www.gender.de/mainstreaming/GenderManifesto_engl.pdf

- Deconstructing gender, therewith creating open space for diverse models of gender existence and multiple ways of living

“Undoing gender“

- Unlearning gender stereotypes as an opportunity instead of as a threat
- (Gradually) upsetting the gender order rather than speaking of “female“ and “male“ respectively, “gender specific“ habits and behaviour
- Encouraging a conception of a person’s identity as open and never terminated

Raising awareness of the “paradoxes of gender“

- Reflecting upon the double-edge of “doing gender“, e.g. in the practice of “gender analysis“ (generating gender based data)

Putting Gender concepts into the respective context

- Situating Gender as a concept based on feminist theory and practice, and locating it historically in the political movement context

Posing questions on power relations

- Concentrating on predominance and privileged structures in gender relations, and developing concrete steps for gender-transformative change

Facilitating participatory-methodology trainings

- Focussing on the process and the participants
- Communicating Gender in an interactive instead of an instructive way (for instance, through analysing stereotypes with the aim to point out diversity and discussing standardisation processes and ways in which gender ambiguity is socially sanctioned)

Developing precisely-tailored concepts instead of offering standard recipes

- Putting into context “gender analysis“ and Gender Training and adjusting the content accordingly, as well as highlighting possibilities of linking Gender with other social categorie

Drawing together these theoretical and methodological principles, the authors of the Manifesto propose the following professional standards:

1. A reflective “Gender practice“ [which] opposes the reproduction of gender duality and offers instead an analysis of its foundation, its ways of functioning and its effects, in order to find long term solutions to overcome it.
2. A reflective gender practice [which] opposes the trivialisation and dramatisation of gender. It promotes the specific perception of individual interests and capabilities beyond gender-based preconceptions, without losing sight of the influence of the hierarchical social gender order.
3. A reflective gender practice [which] offers gender as an open concept and creates space for ideas for the elimination of previous restrictions on gender identities.

4. A reflective gender practice [which] is aware that the origins of gender work are based in the feminist movements and relates to those roots. It respects the work of colleagues in the field and explicitly cites and credits the sources and resources used.

5. A reflective gender practice [which] highlights the potential tension in the relationship between efficiency and equality and is committed to gender equality.

The Gender Manifesto offers a clear contribution to debates on quality in training for gender equality. It raises questions around a commitment to “undoing gender”. However, the highly conceptual level of such an approach needs to be considered from the perspective of practice, and how it could be applied to the diverse contexts of training for gender equality.

Madrid Declaration on Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice

On a more international level, the Madrid Declaration¹⁶ was developed in a collective manner at the OPERA Conference on Gender+ Training in Madrid in February 2011. The Declaration expresses a commitment to “delivering, commissioning and further developing the highest quality training”. Using the term gender+, the Declaration acknowledges the fundamental importance of an intersectional approach to training for gender equality and sets out a clear notion of what such ‘quality’ entails. This relates specifically to different phases of the Training Cycle.

Concerning the positioning of Gender+ training:

- Gender+ training should ideally be carried out as part of a broader explicit gender mainstreaming strategy
- Gender+ training ultimately is a means towards making policies work better for people through improving the quality of policy making
- Gender+ training is linked to the broader community of gender+ scholars, researchers and students and learns from and contributes to this community

Concerning the content and methods of Gender+ training:

- The content of gender+ training should include the structural character of inequalities, the power mechanisms reproducing these inequalities and the privileges and power enjoyed by some groups, so that gender+ biases and gender+ blindness are understood as a result of the inequalities that are to be overcome
- Intersectionality should be integrated into gender+ trainings
- Transformative learning methodologies such as participatory and experiential methods should be used whenever possible in order to maximise the learning experience for participants
- Resistances to gender+ training should be embraced and dealt with as part of a necessary process of organisational/institutional, societal and personal change
- Gender+ training is based on feminist and gender theories translated to practitioners. Trainers should actively search for ways to communicate up to date feminist and gender theories in the training

¹⁶ QUING (2011) “Madrid Declaration on Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice, Complutense University, Madrid, February 3–4, 2011.” Available: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bbm%3A978-1-137-48685-1%2F1.pdf>

- Gender+ training should combine knowledge transfer with competence and capacity building while also confronting attitudes that could hinder the application of knowledge and competences

Concerning the further development of high quality Gender+ training: sharing, reflecting and professionalising

- Innovations in theory and methodology should be developed, shared and applied in order to remain on the cutting edge of expertise in both training and gender+
- Experiences should be shared by engaging in (sub)national, European and transnational networks and Communities of Practice based on transparency, inclusiveness, an appetite for ‘practices with potential’, and recognition of others’ work
- Reflexivity enhancing practices should be an integral part of any gender+ training and mainstreaming proposal and activity, using methods such questioning, peer review and intervision
- Gender+ trainers, commissioners, gender+ training experts and representatives of equality institutions should work together in an open dialogue to develop professional quality standards on theory, methodology, format and ethics, including sufficient time for training and sensitivity to context
- Gender+ trainers, commissioners and gender+ training experts should be realistic in their expectations and in the design and implementation of gender+ training, specifying the level of training and the time and resources allocated to the training

The Madrid Declaration offers a useful set of criteria as a starting point for thinking about quality in training for gender equality.

Criteria for quality in training for gender equality

Following this analysis, a number of key aspects can be identified as missing from the Training Centre’s current criteria. First, there is no specific attention paid to a “reflective gender practice” – as proposed in the Gender Manifesto – which “opposes the reproduction of gender duality and offers instead an analysis of its foundation, its ways of functioning and its effects, in order to find long term solutions to overcome it”. In addition, the criteria do not acknowledge the “potential tension in the relationship between efficiency and equality”. From the Madrid Declaration, the discussion of resistances is important for developing quality criteria – “resistances to gender+ training should be embraced and dealt with as part of a necessary process of organisational/institutional, societal and personal change”.

Drawing on the insights gathered from these different approaches – as well as the broader themes outlined in the previous section - a number of over-arching quality criteria can be identified. These criteria cover three key aspects of training for gender equality – quality of content and knowledge; quality of methodologies; and quality of trainers.

- Training for gender equality is part of a feminist political project of transformation of unequal gendered power relations
- Respect for professional ethics for feminist knowledge transfer
- Training is embedded training in broader gender-transformative change project and explicitly articulated as part of a Theory of change

- Recognition of complexities in practice
- Adherence to feminist pedagogical principles and practices
- Intersectional analysis and approach

These are now elaborated in turn. First, quality in training for gender equality involves an explicit recognition of the *political* nature of this endeavour. Moreover, this requires a commitment to training for gender equality as a part of a **feminist political project which seeks the transformation of unequal gendered power relations**. Bustelo, Ferguson and Forest, for example, call for a “re-politicization of feminist knowledge transfer”. In this understanding, training for gender equality should be a process which “challenges embedded power structures, unravels hidden hegemonies, empowers, and creates a space for collective deliberation”.¹⁷ This call is echoed to an extent in the Gender Manifesto, with its opposition to the reproduction of gender duality and recognition of the origins of “gender work” in feminist movements, and in the Madrid Declaration which explicitly calls for training which addresses “the structural character of inequalities, the power mechanisms reproducing these inequalities and the privileges and power enjoyed by some groups.” However, such a call is not universally accepted. As discussed by the participants in the UN Women Training Centre’s Expert Group Meeting for example, such a commitment can be productive or counter-productive depending on the conditions in which the training is to be delivered. This is due to the often conflictual or even hostile approaches to gender equality that can be found in many institutions in which training is taking (or not taking) place.

Following on from this, we require a set of “**professional ethics**”, both in feminist knowledge transfer and training for gender equality more specifically. Prügl’s contribution to this debate is particularly helpful, as she argues that “wielding feminist power requires ethical guidelines”. She proposes a set of ethical principles that could guide the practice of training and expertise for gender equality. These draw on the fields of deliberative democracy and feminist methodology, which she argues are fundamental for developing a *feminist* approach to knowledge transfer. They are:

- Rational deliberation across difference that is open towards a change in being;
- Ensuring non-coercion and equality in deliberation, while enabling feminist social criticism;
- Inclusiveness of diverse knowledges paired with working in a participatory manner, and in partnership, for collective validation; and
- Reflexivity *vis-à-vis* both processes and epistemic commitments.¹⁸

Prügl argues that rational deliberation is founded on understanding, requiring an openness to changing points of view and to changing the way we are. Such deliberation must be non-coercive, free from unequal displaces of power, and inclusive of diverse knowledges and participatory learning. Reflexivity is key, requiring an appreciation for the power relations in which we are embedded.

¹⁷ Bustelo, M. Ferguson, L. and Forest, M. (2016) “Conclusions”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 172.

¹⁸ Prüg, E. (2016) “How to Wield Feminist Power”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 38.

Next, quality in training for gender equality requires an understanding of how **training contributes to a broader process of gender-transformative change**. This requires, for example, paying attention to theories of change – both at the level of the training intervention and the gender mainstreaming processes in which it is embedded. For an in-depth discussion of theories of change for training for gender equality, please see the accompanying Working Paper in this series.

As the Madrid Declaration notes, training should be carried out as part of a broader explicit gender mainstreaming strategy. In addition, this suggests taking seriously the role of resistances in gender-transformative change processes, and engaging explicitly with such resistances. Indeed, as Bustelo et al. argue, “resistance and contestation must be present in order for such a scenario to be considered ‘feminist’ and ‘transformative’”.¹⁹ The Madrid Declaration similarly calls for resistances to be embraced and addressed throughout training processes.

“The purpose of gender expertise and gender training should be to make ‘truths’ on gender the subject of deliberation. In turn, this shifts the focus of feminist knowledge transfer from a primary concern with the “quality of outcomes” to one which pays more attention to the ‘quality’ of processes” in which gender experts engage.”²⁰ (Prügl 2016)

It is also important to acknowledge that in the practice of training for gender equality flexibility is required for dealing with such resistances, tensions and conflicts – what Prügl refers to as “recognizing complexities in practice”.²¹ This suggests an acknowledgement that in some cases and contexts, a middle ground is required – between “embracing resistances and deliberation and delivering feminist expertise and training in less than ideal circumstances”.²² The call here is for an understanding of training for gender equality in which the maximum change is sought in each training scenario, whilst paying attention to the limitations and possibilities of different political and institutional contexts. As the Gender Manifesto sets out, training should highlight “the potential tension in the relationship between efficiency and equality”.

Next, quality in training for gender equality means adhering to a broad set of **feminist pedagogical principles and practices**. Broadly speaking, these encompass four underlying principles: participatory learning; validation of personal experience; encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability; and the development of critical thinking and open-mindedness.²³ These principles are discussed in detail in the accompanying paper from this Working Series. These involve cultivating a learning environment in which the trainers and trainees work against the creation of hierarchy – rather than being an ‘expert’ imparting knowledge, the feminist pedagogue becomes a facilitator and learner at the same time while learners are actively invited to take part in the creation and sharing of knowledge. Moreover, the personal is valued as a source of legitimate and valid knowledge, with learners encouraged to understand personal experience as political, historical and socially constructed²⁴ in order

19 Bustelo, M. Ferguson, L. and Forest, M. (2016) “Conclusions”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 170.

20 Prügl, E. (2016) “How to Wield Feminist Power”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 29.

21 Ibid.

22 Bustelo, M. Ferguson, L. and Forest, M. (2016) “Conclusions”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 171.

23 UN Women Training Centre (forthcoming) *Feminist Pedagogies in Training for Gender Equality*. Prepared by L. Ferguson. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.

24 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.

to develop a critical framework that will enable and empower them to link personal experience with institutional structures of subordination.²⁵ The aim is to translate feminist pedagogical principles into the transformation of social lives and social justice. Accountability is key as learning processes guided by such principles hold learners, facilitators and institutions accountable for their attitudes, behaviours and practices/actions. Finally, critical thinking and open-mindedness are qualities that must be adopted by learners and facilitators alike. Moreover, to realise the feminist goal of transforming gender inequalities, it is essential to approach the power dynamics and politics of each stage of the training cycle, so as to uphold feminist pedagogies across all of these stages.

“In sum, good training work is differentiated, experiential and self-reflexive about where and how it imagines change to result”.²⁶ (Marx Ferree 2015)

Finally, an **intersectional approach and analysis** should be understood as essential for quality in training for gender equality. An intersectional approach is grounded upon recognising the intersection of different social identities, and the ways in which “people are members of more than one community at the same time, and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege.”²⁷ To take an intersectional approach is to link oppressions, such as oppressions on the basis of gender, with oppressions and power imbalances predicated on other grounds. It aims to “reveal multiple identities, exposing the different types of discrimination and disadvantage that occur as a consequence of the combination of identities”, while addressing “the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other systems of discrimination [e.g. gender oppression] create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women” and taking account “of historical, social and political contexts”.²⁸

To date, little explicit work has been done on intersectionality and training for gender equality, and it is rarely found in training manuals in the EU and UN. This is a call taken up by the Madrid Declaration. Bustelo et al. propose that a focus on process and deliberation in training for gender equality allows for intersectionality to be addressed more substantively in the training scenario, “through engagements with hierarchies and stratified knowledges, which can be brought out in training and expertise contexts”.²⁹ As such, a truly intersectional approach to training for gender equality can be considered very much a work in progress. A mark of quality in this area could be *striving* for an explicit inclusion of intersectionality in all aspects of the training process.

25 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.

26 UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Training for gender equality as a source of organizational change: What is to be changed, how is it to be changed, and who is to change it*. Prepared by M. Marx Ferree. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 25.

27 AWID (2004) “Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice”, *Women’s Rights and Economic Change*, 9, pp. 2. Available: https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/intersectionality_a_tool_for_gender_and_economic_justice.pdf

28 Ibid.

29 Bustelo, M. Ferguson, L. and Forest, M. (2016) “Conclusions”, in M. Bustelo, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 173.

ASSURING QUALITY IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY (MECHANISMS)

In order to embed quality *criteria* in the practice of training for gender equality, it is necessary to develop a number of *mechanisms*.

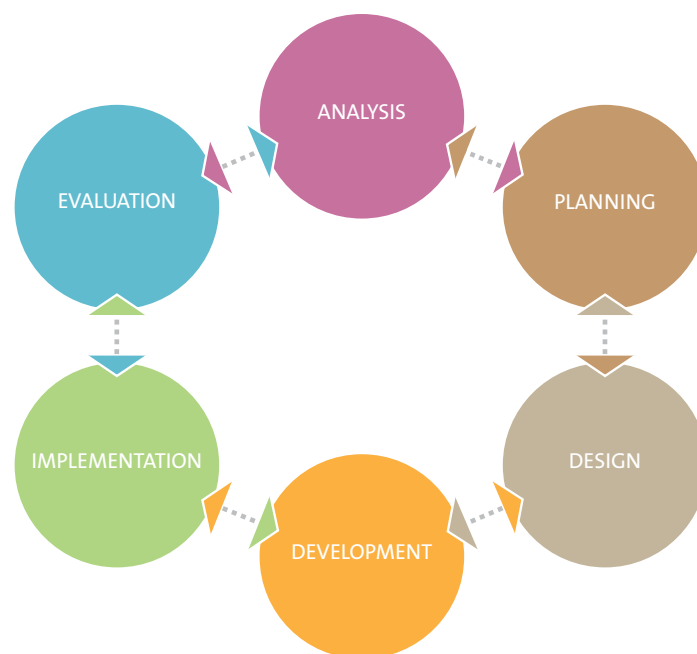
For the UN Women Training Centre, these are:

- a. Feasibility assessment
- b. Learning needs assessment
- c. Peer review process
- d. Consultant/company recruitment and selection process
- e. Piloting
- f. Evaluation

In this paper we propose expanding and broadening these mechanisms in order to adhere to the principles and criteria set out above. Moreover, such mechanisms are specific to the work of the Training Centre, and may not capture the full range of proposed quality criteria. As the preceding section focused on general principles for quality in training for gender equality, here the focus is more explicitly on the practical aspects. Broadly, these mechanisms are designed to assure quality in three key aspects of training for gender equality – quality of content and knowledge; quality of methodologies; and quality of trainers.

It is useful to use the training cycle as a guide for this, as it reminds us of the cyclical nature of training and ensures a focus on process as well as outcomes (see Figure 1). As these stages of the Training Cycle apply to all aspects of training for gender equality, minimum quality criteria must also apply to all the broadly defined types of training presented in the Training Centre's Typology. Arguably, these are just as relevant whether training seeks simply to raise awareness, or aspires to enhance skills or to mobilise participants to transform their societies and institutions.

FIGURE 1 – THE STAGES OF THE TRAINING CYCLE



Source: *Typology on Training for Gender Equality*³⁰

We propose some cross-cutting mechanisms that can be applied across different stages of the Training Cycle:

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

The paper now goes on to outline in detail the different stages of the Training Cycle, discussing which quality assurance mechanisms can be applied for each stage.

Analysis and Planning

This phase includes preliminary discussions and negotiations with those institutions commissioning training for gender equality. Here, the opportunity should be taken to argue for an ongoing learning process – not one-off trainings. Moreover, the commissioners should provide information about how the training fits into broader strategies of gender-transformative change, such as a gender mainstreaming strategy and gender equality policies. Trainers and commissioners should discuss explicitly the ways in which the training is expected to

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

contribute to such change, and what theories of change this entails. It should be noted here that participants in the UN Women Training Centre Expert Group Meeting pointed out that bad quality training is easy to come by and may fulfil the requirements of commissioners. As such, quality assurance needs to involve commissioners in order to ensure that the market is in tune with the level of professionals, and that good trainers – as defined above – will not be undercut.

“While sometimes ‘better than nothing’, such thin and unidirectional training also risks being a ‘cure worse than the disease’: people may be frustrated and angry about needing to follow a checklist even if they have been taught how to do so, if they have not also been drawn into the process of setting and achieving the goals of the process. Gender expertise that addresses gender as a single binary distinction with universal meaning may not help capture the actual dynamics of gender inequality and may even tend to direct “women’s empowerment” in directions that are inappropriate and even resented”.³¹ (Marx Ferree 2015)

For the Training Centre, a feasibility assessment must be conducted in order to analyse whether or not the proposed training is worth undertaking. A feasibility assessment must always be implemented, even if UN, government or civil society organisations externally commission the training course. This creates a solid foundation for a successful training including determining clear training needs and learning outcomes, avoiding duplication, and creating buy-in and building a shared understanding of the training. The six criteria for the feasibility assessment regarding whether or not to develop a new UN Women Training Centre training course are:

1. Relevance to UN Women and the UN Women Training Centre mandates and functions
2. Responsiveness to the needs of the organisation and target audience
3. Filling a unique niche
4. Capacity of replication and scale-up
5. Responsiveness to emerging issues and cutting edge topics
6. Cost effectiveness

While these themes are specific to the UN Women Training Centre, they nevertheless demonstrate the utility of a feasibility assessment the initial stages of the training cycle. In addition to a feasibility assessment, the Training Centre considers a comprehensive learning needs assessment to be a key quality assurance mechanism. This can determine realistic learning outcomes, accurate target audience(s), baseline data for monitoring and evaluation, guidance on training content, methodology and communication strategy as well as raising awareness and building support (buy-in). A learning needs assessment can be conducted as part of the analysis phase or at multiple phases in the training cycle including design, planning and implementation and should be done at three levels - organisation, target audience and training participant. Learning needs assessments are particularly useful in highlighting substantive gaps in knowledge and the application of existing knowledge, while identifying specific training needs. Based on these, potential trainers who best match the specific learning requirements of the institution can be identified. Please see the Training Manual for more details.

During the analysis and planning stage, continuing discussions and negotiations with commissioners should present training for gender equality as a *feminist political project*. This should involve identifying hierarchies in

31 UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Training for gender equality as a source of organizational change: What is to be changed, how is it to be changed, and who is to change it*. Prepared by M. Marx Ferree. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 22.

the institution and exploring potential resistances. A proposed quality assurance mechanism for addressing this criteria is to adopt a Theory of Change methodology. As outlined in more detail in the accompanying paper on Theory of Change, such a theory for training for gender equality would provide a more solid base from which to demonstrate and elaborate the ways in which training contributes to broader gender-transformative change. Such a theory, or multiple theories, would enable us to “create a shared vision of the long-term change we all want to see in a given community, how this change will be reached, and how we will measure our progress along the way.”³² Theory of change methodologies can contribute to the effectiveness of training for gender equality by:

- Clarifying assumptions and “identifying the intermediary steps” and “specific outputs that a programme or intervention can realistically anticipate”³³;
- Identifying “entry points, risks and opportunities” specific to the institutional context and “proposing an explicit Theory of Change that explains how [gender mainstreaming] interventions could contribute to the organisational goals”³⁴
- Developing “hypotheses and consensus on how [gender mainstreaming] is supposed to work in a specific programme or intervention; how stakeholders view the need for change; and how they perceive the actual changes.”³⁵

The Theory of Change paper establishes clear guidelines and concrete steps for applying the Theory of Change methodology in training for gender equality.

Design and development

Course design and development should draw on best practice in feminist pedagogies and training for gender equality. Feminist pedagogical principles (see Working Paper in this series) can be explored at this stage in order to identify the most appropriate tools and methods for the specific training context. The development process should adopt core feminist principles such as a participatory design process and the recognition of intersectional power hierarchies. Critical pedagogical reflections on curriculum development can highlight how the curriculum itself is a space of power, and that it reproduces social structures. Thus, the design and development process guided by feminist pedagogies pays attention to fostering critical thinking and open-mindedness.

Specifically, feminist pedagogical practices place 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. They are underscored by 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’. The process involves integrating participants’ personal and professional experiences and knowledges on gender into the curriculum, in order to

32 Keystone Accountability (n.d.) *Developing a Theory of Change: A Framework for Accountability and Learning for Social Change. A Keystone Guide*. London: Keystone Accountability, p. 2. Available: http://www.managingforimpact.org/sites/default/files/resource/developing_a_theory_of_change.pdf

33 UN Women (2013) *Expert Group Meeting: Gender mainstreaming approaches in development programming: being strategic and achieving results in an evolving development context*. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 30 April – 3 May 2013. Prepared by S. I. Cohen, N. Sachdeva, S. J. Taylor and P. Cortes. Santo Domingo: UN Women, p. 14. Available: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/How%20We%20Work/UNSystemCoordination/FINAL%20EGM%20REPORT%201%20NOV%20version%20pdf.pdf>

34 Ibid., p. 30.

35 Ibid., p. 32.

link personal experience with institutional structures of subordination. Such practices imply acknowledging the power dynamics of different training scenarios, and integrating a ‘pedagogy for the privileged’ or “education for the privileged” into the curriculum development process when appropriate³⁶. Finally, several feminist pedagogical methods and techniques may be integrated into the training design, such as participatory, experiential learning.

In terms of quality assurance mechanisms, the Training Centre uses a participatory approach that includes a peer review process in the design and development of its courses. This increases the legitimacy of the content, assures the quality and augments the sense of ownership. When the courses are developed in collaboration with other academic or civil society institutions, other UN agencies or international organisations or government agencies, these implementing and collaboration partners are actively involved from the initial design of the training. Peer review can thus take different forms depending on partners, type of content and learning modality (e.g. online or face-to-face).

For the purposes of this paper, **peer review and reflexivity** are key quality assurance mechanisms. This involves explicit engagement with a broad range of stakeholders, and ongoing critical reflection on the objectives, methods and content of the training – as well as the over-arching principles and values that underpin these processes. In the Design and Development stage, peer review and reflexivity involve engaging with latest good practice on curriculum development, and taking a reflexive and critical approach to the processes of knowledge construction, knowledge selection and knowledge transfer.

Implementation

A further quality assurance mechanism for the Training Centre is piloting and revision. It involves testing with a pilot group that should represent the diversity of participants who are typically taking the course. The aim of piloting is the testing/assessing of several elements of the training course including content, methodology, learning modality and logistics to see whether or not they achieve the learning outcomes and fulfil the Training Centre training for gender equality quality assurance criteria. Based on the feedback from the piloting, the course should be revised, provided it falls within the given scope and learning outcomes of the course. For the purposes of this paper, peer review is considered a **cross-cutting quality assurance mechanism**. In the implementation stage, peer review is linked to piloting and revision, allowing further input from a range of stakeholders in order to ensure the training meets the quality criteria.

A further aspect of the implementation stage requires trainers to engage in continual learning, reflexivity and peer review. As Marx Ferree argues, “trainers should be viewed as professionals whose judgment, peer networks and continued processes of learning from experience and responding to changes of circumstance are the guarantors of the quality of their work”.³⁷ This is echoed in the Madrid Declaration, which suggests that “reflexivity enhancing practices should be an integral part of any gender+ training and mainstreaming proposal and activity, using methods such as questioning, peer review, and intervision.”³⁸ As such, peer review in the implementation stage is bound up not only with reviewing the training contents and methods, but also with reviewing the trainers themselves, as a core quality assurance mechanism.

36 See UN Women Training Centre Webinar on “Privilege, Power and Training for Gender Equality” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNeyjctVqQ>

37 UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Training for gender equality as a source of organizational change: What is to be changed, how is it to be changed, and who is to change it*. Prepared by M. Marx Ferree. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 25.

38 QUING (2011) “Madrid Declaration on Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice, Complutense University, Madrid, February 3-4, 2011.” Available: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bbm%3A978-1-137-48685-1%2F1.pdf>

While feminist pedagogical principles and practices are important at all stages, in the implementation phase these lie specifically with the trainers themselves. For the Training Centre, the recruitment and selection of consultant/s and companies as a quality assurance mechanism in itself. This involves developing a terms of reference or request for proposals, depending on the size and scope of the project. This is important for ensuring that the key values and competencies related to training for gender equality are included. The question of the professionalisation of gender trainers is beyond the scope of the current paper. Nevertheless, across the literature and communities of practice there seem to be a widely agreed set of criteria about what makes a *good* or even *excellent* trainer for gender equality. As such, here we propose a sub-set of qualities, skills and competences that can support trainers to implement feminist pedagogical principles and practices:

- Personal commitment to feminist political project and transformative social change
- Has specialist knowledge and expertise on gender which is situated and grounded in practice
- Possesses the adequate specialist knowledge, experience and skills required for the specific training context
- Ability to easily connect and interact with participants
- Deals with power, resistances and hierarchies in a skillful and constructive manner
- Employment of reflexivity to mitigate against hierarchies of power and privilege between trainers and trainees
- Deploys feminist pedagogical practices
- Adopts an intersectional analysis and approach

Grounded, situated knowledge and expertise. As Marx Ferree argues, “Trainers can be more or less specialized in specific types of interventions, but the expertise on which they draw is not purely textbook knowledge but rather development of concerted knowledge, motivations and skills through hands-on learning guided by theory. Both a theory of gender that conceptualizes the goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment in concrete but generalizable terms and a theory of change that defines what specific training interventions can realistically be expected to accomplish are essential parts of the expertise of trainers, as are pedagogical techniques and vernacularized practice in analyzing organizations, assessing power relations, and identifying potentials for change in specific settings”.³⁹ This specialist knowledge and expertise on gender, grounded in practice, should ideally be built into the Terms of Reference for trainers so that it can be clearly and explicitly embedded in the Training Cycle.

Context-appropriate specialist knowledge, experience and skills. As argued in the Compendium of Good Practices, “both a trainer’s legitimacy and their contextual knowledge are considered central to their capacity to respond to participants’ needs in real time, adapt the training accordingly, and respond to resistance effectively”.⁴⁰ The use of local facilitators was especially stressed by Latin American and African representatives, demonstrating

39 UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Training for gender equality as a source of organizational change: What is to be changed, how is it to be changed, and who is to change it*. Prepared by M. Marx Ferree, Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 25.

40 UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality*. Prepared by L. Ferguson, R. Leghari and E. Wretblad. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre.

how feminist approaches are interlinked with post-colonial politics and race/ethnicity issues in these regions. Especially in Latin America, civil society or government institutions may sometimes perceive foreign/international experts as imposing views and concepts. In the examples highlighted here, resistance to such “impositions” was diminished through the presence of local/national trainers.⁴¹

“The trainer is either the best or worst thing within a training. The trainer is an artist able to readapt and respond to what happens during the training.” - Alicia Ziffer, Training Programme Coordinator, UN Women Training Centre.⁴²

Skilful management of power, resistances and hierarchies. As the Compendium of Good Practices contends, it is important for trainers to “respond to power inequalities”. Whereas it may not be possible to overcome these, they “can be thought about and acted upon” by trainers addressing their own biases, so that “trainer and trainee step out of an oppositional relationship”.⁴³ Trainers with a background in social transformation may be particularly well-placed to “make participants aware of the path that their professional and private lives are taking as a result of their gender identity, of their choice of values, and of their levels of awareness of different preconceptions about women, men, their images, their roles, and their relationships”.⁴⁴

“Gender trainings need to be personal. Facilitators need to encourage participants to share their own life experiences and to create a space where it is safe for them to do so.” - Jenn Williamson Director of Gender Mainstreaming & Women’s Empowerment, ACDI/VOCA.⁴⁵

Skilled in feminist pedagogical practices. This involves providing “an enabling environment in which training participants are encouraged to express themselves, reflect critically, connect with each another, and learn collaboratively”.⁴⁶ As Wong, Vaast and Mukhopadhyay highlight, it is useful to perceive of training for gender equality as performance. “Trainers are judged by participants not only for what they are supposed to know but how they share this knowledge in appealing and entertaining ways. Additionally, they are, on the one hand, expected to have expert knowledge, and, on the other, be able to facilitate participants’ knowledge deepening. They often face the dual criticism of not knowing enough, because of their emphasis on facilitation, or know too much in the way they present knowledge”.⁴⁷ Dealing with this paradox involves a high level of skill and confidence on the part of the trainer, as well as a level of “fluency” with gender concepts, which offers trainers “a repertoire of ways and examples to make ideas meaningful and relevant to trainees while maintaining their political and analytical power”.⁴⁸

41 Ibid., p. 21.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Vouhé, C. (2007) “Gender and development training in the Francophone world”, in M. Mukhopadhyay and F. Wong, *Revisiting Gender Training: The Making and Remaking of Gender Knowledge*. Amsterdam: KIT-Royal Tropical Institute, p. 67-68.

45 UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality*. Prepared by L. Ferguson, R. Leghari and E. Wretblad. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 21.

46 UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Typology on Training for Gender Equality*. Prepared by R. Leghari and E. Wretblad. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 28.

47 Wong, F., Vaast, C. and Mukhopadhyay, M. (2016) *Review and Mapping Paper: Conceptualizing Professional Development of Gender Trainers*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre by KIT (Amsterdam) (forthcoming), p. 8.

48 Ibid, p. 10.

Adopts an intersectional approach and analysis. “It is important for the trainer not only to impart knowledge about intersectional theories and research, but also to show how to put them into practice. Therefore, the trainer needs to know how to apply an intersectional perspective onto a policy field. That means that a specific field competence is needed as well as gender+/- intersectionality competence.

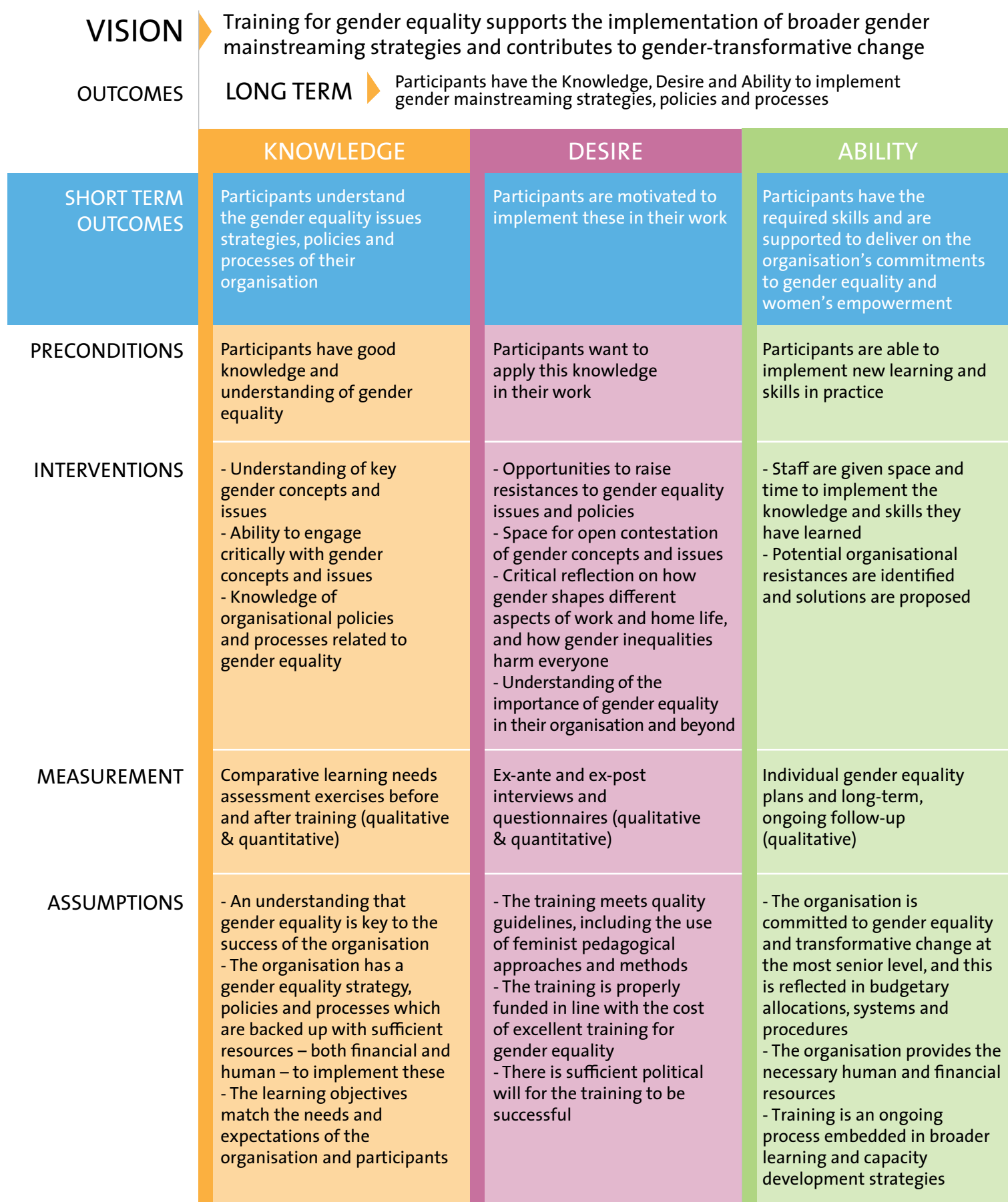
Evaluation

As a key quality assurance mechanism, evaluation processes and methods which matches the principles of feminist/gender-transformative evaluation, specifically tailored to training for gender equality (see paper in this Working Series). The UN Women Training Centre considers evaluation as a key mechanism for ensuring that quality criteria have been met. A number of evaluation methods are used by the Training Centre to fulfil this purpose, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, across the short, medium and long-term. The Kirkpatrick evaluation model is used in order to evaluate the impact of training: reaction (questionnaires and interviews); learning (exercises and tests); behavior (currently not measured by the Training Centre) and results (Most Significant Change method).

Reflexivity and peer review on the part of trainers, training institutions and commissioners are further assurance mechanisms for. This may involve, for example, the participation of trainers in communities of practice in which insights and experiences are shared, and peers hold each other accountable for meeting shared quality criteria. This also requires an exchange between researchers and practitioners, to ensure a collective and ongoing development of understandings of key challenges in training for gender equality, and how these can be addressed. Practitioners need to be afforded the space and time for such reflection, as this is not always possible within the current model of training for gender equality.

A further quality assurance mechanism for the evaluation stage is the **Theory of Change** methodology. This can be used as a tool for evaluating the extent to which the anticipated change has been met, exploring the barriers to such change, and reformulating our Theory of Change, as set out in detail in the working paper on this issue. Evaluations appropriate for different types of training depend on the norms and resources of organisations and the individuals within them. Evaluation instruments should be matched to the types of training offered so as to better measure the kind of change attained. In line with feminist principles, participant feedback must be applied explicitly and systematically throughout monitoring, learning and evaluation processes. As such, participants need to be consulted, at the start and throughout the Theory of Change process.

FIGURE 2 - PROPOSED THEORY OF CHANGE FOR TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY



DRIVING QUALITY PROCESSES IN TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The above review demonstrates a number of attempts to initiate a process of quality guidelines and mechanisms in training for gender equality. To date, no single initiative or approach has reached a widespread audience across the field. It is worth considering here some of the tensions and challenges involved in such a process, before developing some recommendations for how this could be managed in an inclusive, participatory manner. Participants in the EIGE online discussion, for example, identified some concerns with developing quality criteria, such as: Who will define quality? Who would set the standards and who will monitor and evaluate them? Are there dangers in setting a minimum quality standard? Will the hands-on experience of gender trainers be sufficiently recognised?⁴⁹ The OPERA report concluded that a notion of “minimum” standards might be the best option. However, it also expresses concern that any such standards would use the “lowest common denominator” in order to be inclusive.⁵⁰

As argued in this paper and identified across the literature, one key concern about quality in much training for gender equality is its often ‘non-feminist’ or even anti-feminist in nature. As posed by Ferguson⁵¹, “How can we make a claim that someone else’s knowledge on gender is wrong – that is, not feminist – and therefore not a true gender approach? Are we saying that only feminists can have gender expertise and knowledge? What, if anything, do we gain for our profession by doing so?” Drawing from this, how do we approach the issue of trainers for gender equality who do not identify as feminist? Should all training for gender equality be feminist? Does this need to be explicit or can it be implicit? How do we tackle the ways in which institutional cultures may shape and influence trainers in non-feminist ways?

An important issue to acknowledge here is the dependence of trainers on the institutions which commission training for gender equality. The marketisation of training for gender equality “not only tends to shape what gender training looks like; it also makes the tools and methodological approaches developed by trainers a competitive matter, as trainers need to sell their competences on a developing market”.⁵² Moreover, this dependence can limit the freedom and autonomy of trainers to apply an externally-imposed set of quality criteria. How might this affect the ‘feminist’ commitments of trainers, and how can this be addressed? Perhaps a notion of ‘minimum standards’ and a commitment to flexibility are necessary, to avoid excluding certain groups of actors?

49 EIGE (2014) *Quality assurance mechanisms for gender training in the European Union: Reflections from the online discussion*. Vilnius: European Institute for Gender Equality, p.7. Available: <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0113604ENC.PDF>

50 OPERA Team (2010) *OPERA Final Report Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice*, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.). QUING: Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies Integrated Project. Available https://www.iwm.at/projects/quiring/www.quing.eu/files/results/final_opera_report.pdf

51 Ferguson, L. (2015) "This Is Our Gender Person": The Messy Business of Working as a Gender Expert in International Development", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 17(3), p. 386.

52 OPERA Team (2010) *OPERA Final Report Advancing Gender+ Training in Theory and Practice*, L. Ferguson and M. Forest (Eds.). QUING: Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies Integrated Project. Available: https://www.iwm.at/projects/quiring/www.quing.eu/files/results/final_opera_report.pdf

This discussion is usefully viewed alongside a reflection on the decolonisation of knowledge on gender, or feminist knowledges. Gender experts have been accused of “overly complicating gender knowledge and thus reinforcing its exclusive associations requiring their expertise to decipher”.⁵³ There is a danger that quality processes may serve to reinforce the notion of gender experts as “custodians” of gender knowledge.⁵⁴ Moreover, such notions of superior and hegemonic forms of knowledge “are often associated with Western, Western-professionalized or Western-trained specialists”.⁵⁵ As Standing identifies, this can problematically lead to a set of ideas about “a right and a wrong way to ‘do’ gender in policy contexts”.⁵⁶ As such, it is necessary to respect the multi-faceted ways and contexts in which trainers operate. This means acknowledging “the variability of organisations and their needs and training goals.”⁵⁷ An important question to consider – as raised by Marx Ferree – is whether such a process will be competitive and managerial or professional and peer evaluated? How can such a process avoid the fate of the “NGO-ization of feminist practice,” advantaging those with “more ties to dominant groups, more facility in dominant languages, more resources for auditing performance”?⁵⁸

This calls for a substantive reflection on the dangers of creating underlying assumptions about *who trainers are* – both in terms of location and of identities. For example, as highlighted in the literature on feminist pedagogies, the experiences of women of colour have often been marginalised within this field.⁵⁹ Paying attention to this issue means that feminists – and by extension, feminist trainers for gender equality – “abandon the conventional Western feminist gaze and redefine the process of teaching and learning.” Further, it is important not to “deny or silence the contributions of women of colour, particularly when we want to teach students [or training participants] to be critical of the inequalities and hegemonic social structures that are responsible for the world’s injustices.”⁶⁰

Following on from this, how can the development of quality guidelines be done in such a way so as to ensure that certain gender – and other - identities are not privileged over others? Following the *Gender Manifesto*, if the aim of training for gender equality is to “undo gender”, how do we actively promote the undoing of gender in the broader field? To what extent might calls for the professionalisation of training for gender equality exclude those with non-conformist or non-cisgender identities? How could this be counteracted? Are there certain implicit assumptions within the field that trainers are women, and are these assumptions presented in an unproblematic manner? How can quality guidelines initiatives also attend to male or male-identifying trainers, and what is the role of masculinities in training scenarios? The field of gender and education pays attention to

53 Wong, F., Vaast, C. and Mukhopadhyay, M. (2016) *Review and Mapping Paper: Conceptualizing Professional Development of Gender Trainers*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre by KIT (Amsterdam), p. 3.

54 Pialek, N. (2007) “Gender Mainstreaming in Development Organizations Organizational Discourse and the Perils of Institutional Change”, in L.A. Duran, N.D. Payne, Duran, A. and A.R. Garrido (Eds.) *Building Feminist Movements and Organizations: Global Perspectives*. New York: Zed Books Ltd.

55 Wong, F., Vaast, C. and Mukhopadhyay, M. (2016) *Review and Mapping Paper: Conceptualizing Professional Development of Gender Trainers*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre by KIT (Amsterdam), p. 3.

56 Standing, H. (2004) “Gender, Myth and Fable: The Perils of Mainstreaming in Sector Bureaucracies. Repositioning Feminisms in Development”, *IDS Bulletin*, 35(4), p. 83.

57 UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Training for gender equality as a source of organizational change: What is to be changed, how is it to be changed, and who is to change it*. Prepared by M. Marx Ferree. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p.22,

58 *Ibid.*, p.23.

59 Kishimoto, K. and Mwangi, M. (2009) Critiquing the Rhetoric of “Safety” in Feminist Pedagogy: Women of Color Offering an Account of Ourselves, *Feminist Teacher*, 19:2, 87-102.

60 *Ibid.*

these questions, highlighting the dilemmas that male teachers face “in teaching about gender inequality from a position of privilege”.⁶¹

Here the call for a focus on intersectionality is reiterated. This is a necessary over-arching principles not only for the processes and practices of training for gender equality, but also for all aspects of professionalisation in the field. How can ideas about the decolonisation of feminist knowledges and the inclusion of a range of voices be integrated into the process of developing quality criteria and assurance mechanisms? How do we pay attention to who speaks and who does not in the development of such a process, and what measures can be taken to address and redress the silences? How can ideas about ‘teaching vulnerably’⁶² influence not only the pedagogical practices but also the broader processes of professionalisation of training for gender equality? At the same time, how can positions of privilege be acknowledged in the development of quality guidelines and mechanisms? How can the hierarchies at work in such a process be acknowledged, and to what extent can they be addressed? As Bustelo et al. ask, “How does our own training affect what we can and cannot see about gender expertise and gender training?”⁶³

It is beyond the scope of this paper to answer these questions. The purpose here is not to drive a process of quality criteria and assurance mechanisms, but rather to explore what key elements these might entail. However, based on these concerns, a number of recommendations can be proposed for any future process of developing quality guidelines and mechanisms in training for gender equality:

- **Adopt an intersectional approach** – invite a wide range of actors to participate in the development process, and ensure that the process itself does not automatically exclude certain types of trainers, including those whose working language is not English.
- **Promote the decolonisation of knowledge on gender** – ensure that certain forms of knowing and experience are not privileged over others, while retaining a commitment to feminist politics and principles.
- **Pay attention to inequalities already existing within the field of training for gender equality** – acknowledge that many trainers depend on this work for their livelihood, that there are high levels of precarity in the field, and that trainers with different characteristics and backgrounds may find it easier to meet certain criteria than others.
- **Develop a process that is encouraging and supportive of bringing new actors into the field** - in particular younger or more junior trainers. Ensure that the guidelines and mechanisms allow for a learning or development process, and that not all criteria need to be met immediately.
- **Focus on peer evaluation as a methodology for reviewing and evaluating quality** – avoid a top-down process that is managerial and competitive, as this would exclude a range of trainers and does not pay attention to the diversity of experience and approaches of trainers working in different contexts and locations. Promote

61 Flood, Michael. 2011. “Men as students and teachers of feminist scholarship,” *Men and Masculinities* 14(2): 135-154. <https://xyonline.net/sites/xyonline.net/files/Flood%2C%20Men%20as%20Students%20and%20Teachers%20of%20Feminist%20Scholarship%202011.pdf>

62 Kishimoto, K. and Mwangi, M. (2009) Critiquing the Rhetoric of “Safety” in Feminist Pedagogy: Women of Color Offering an Account of Ourselves, *Feminist Teacher*, 19:2, 87-102.

63 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*. Abingdon and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 172.

the use of Communities of Practices as spaces for engagement over the collective development of quality guidelines and mechanisms.

- **Secure funding and human resources to develop and follow up on this process** – as seen with the Gender Manifesto and Madrid Declaration, without specific funding it is difficult to establish a common set of guidelines and quality assurance mechanisms. A plan needs to be put in place with accompanying resources to ensure the success of any such initiative. The plan needs to include funding for promoting inclusive and democratic engagement among a wide range of actors, particularly those with less access to resources and materials, and with less capacity to give their time for free. A budget should also be allocated for translation of such a plan into a number of languages.

These recommendations offer a useful starting point for collectively defining concrete mechanisms to guide the upholding of quality standards throughout training for gender equality initiatives. These may be considered a first step towards a collective definition, intended to lay a minimum basis for quality criteria and spark debate on how to take forward the development of quality mechanisms in light of the key elements discussed in this paper.

STATEMENT ON QUALITY CRITERIA AND QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS FOR TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

To date, there has been no clear agreement across the field as to what quality criteria and quality assurance mechanisms for training for gender equality might entail. For the UN Women Training Centre, quality matters in training for gender equality, because:

- Better quality training leads to better gender equality outcomes
- Training that adheres to an agreed set of principles is more likely to contribute to gender- transformative processes
- The field as a whole can benefit from an inclusive, ongoing approach to quality

Drawing on a number of sources – academic literature, previous collective initiatives in the field, and the Training Centre’s Quality Criteria – we propose the following core set of over-arching quality criteria for training for gender equality:

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

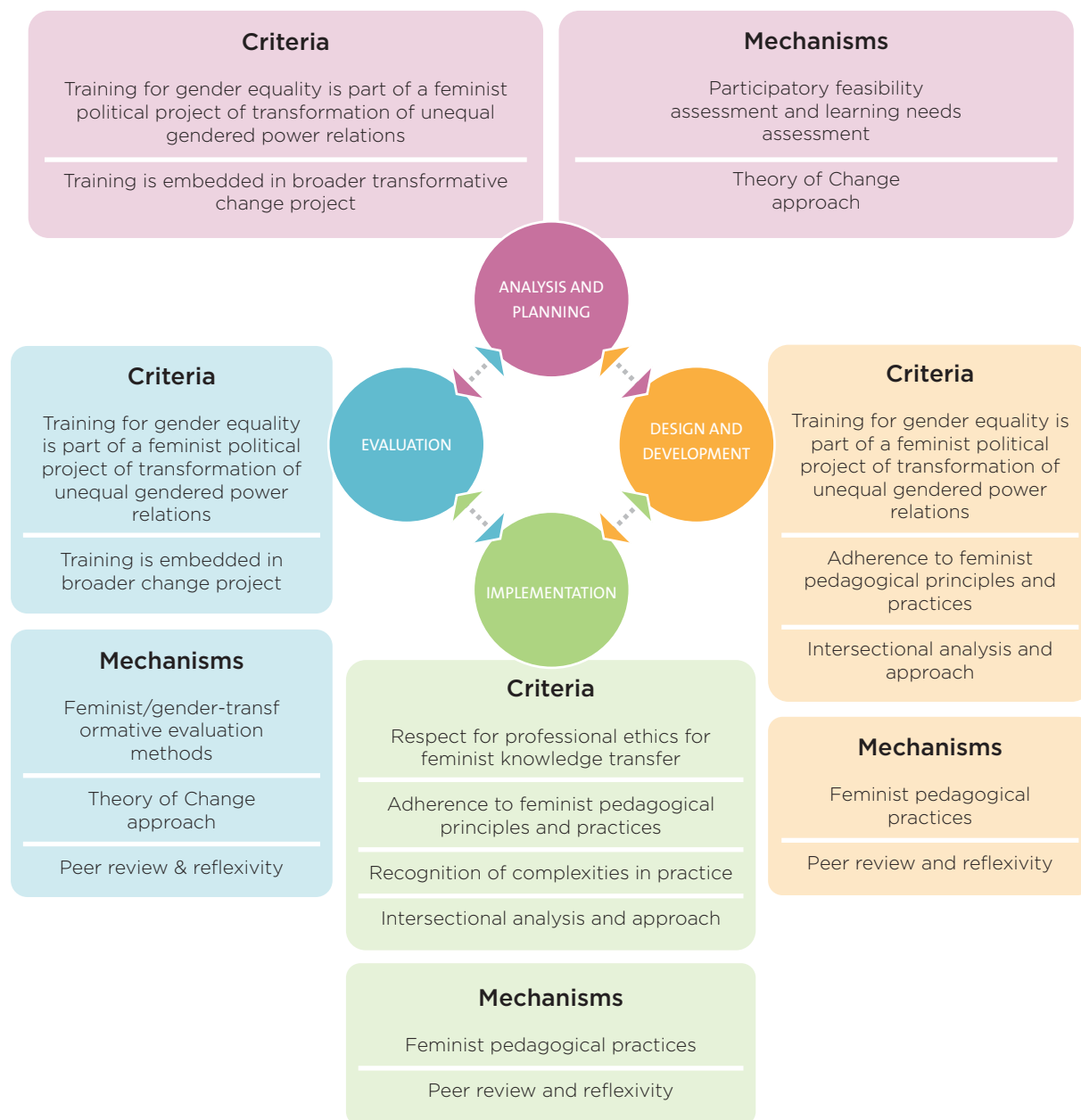
In order to ensure that training for gender equality meets these criteria, a number of Quality Assurance Mechanisms can be employed. For example, some cross-cutting mechanisms that can be applied across different stages of the Training Cycle include:

- Participatory feasibility assessment and learning needs assessment (Analysis and Planning)

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

The diagram below demonstrates how these Criteria and Mechanisms interact with each other – and how they are embedded in the different stages of the Training Cycle.

FIGURE 3 – THEORY OF CHANGE AND FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES AS BUILDING BLOCKS FOR QUALITY TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY



The UN Women Training Centre recognises challenges involved in developing quality criteria for training for gender equality. This Statement is intended as a call for practitioners, trainers and experts to collectively explore how Quality Criteria and Quality Assurance Mechanisms could be developed for different institutions and contexts across the field of training for gender equality.

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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.