From Biology to Strategy: The Development of a Management Team

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Abstract: Research on gender equality projects emphasizes gender equality as a management responsibility, but not many studies focus on how management can organize and implement the process in order to achieve sustainable change. What should the management team actually do? How does the team need to develop in order to be capable of doing what needs to be done? The analysis in this chapter is based mainly on qualitative material in the form of interviews and notes from five workshop days with the management team at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at Oslo University. The data show how the methods and tools that the management team acquired in the workshops have not only given the team members knowledge in the areas they addressed during the workshops, but also the confidence to determine how to proceed in new areas. The concept of sensegiving (cf. Weick & Quinn, 1999) is used to discuss their role in gender equality work. Since gender equality and inequality are done through everyday actions in the organization's processes, the entire organization needs to be invested in any changes. The management team can approach sensegiving by legitimizing the perception of the organization as not being gender equal and by demonstrating how a gender equality perspective can be integrated in the organization's structures and processes.

Keywords: gender equality, management, leadership, organizational change, academia

Introduction

Researchers widely agree that the management team plays a crucial part in promoting gender equality in an organization. Therefore, the FRONT project chose to design an initiative, "Cultural Change Through Management Development", specifically for the management team of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the University of Oslo. The intention was to change the culture throughout the organization by providing leaders with the knowledge and tools needed for gender equality work.

In this chapter, we analyze the process of working with the initiative. We look at what the management team can do to develop sustainable gender equality work in the organization, and what the group needs to be able to do this.

Structurally, this chapter begins with a short summary of research on the importance of management's role in gender equality work. This is followed by a description of the initiative that was implemented, data collection and methodology relating to this, and the theoretical framework of the study. In the main part of the chapter, we will describe two scenes, one from the first workshop and one from the last, to illustrate how the participants' group discussions changed. We then analyze the process in the group and conclude by presenting and discussing our results in the light of other research.

Background: The Importance of Leadership for Gender Equality

Comparatively little research has been done on how gender equality can be organized and implemented to achieve sustainable change (Amundsdotter et al., 2015). All studies that have been carried out, however, emphasize the importance of management's commitment (e.g., Acker, 2000; Franzen, 2012; Lombardo & Mergaert, 2013; NOU 2012; Pincus, 1997; SOU 2003:16; Åberg et al, 2012). The first of the Norwegian Research Council's (NFR) twelve points for improved gender balance in academia also lists management's commitment. "Take responsibility!

The management's commitment, intentions and clear ambitions are decisive to success," the research council states, referring to experiences from the various projects and activities within its gender balance programme (Norwegian Research Council, 2019, translated from the Norwegian).

What is needed is not primarily the commitment of individual managers. Among other things, gender equality programmes require showing how various processes together impact an organization, and how leadership is constructed. This can only be achieved if the management team is on board (Hearn, 2000). Several studies show that management teams need to be acquainted with how gender is "done" in the organization to be capable of leading gender equality work. Not having this knowledge can lead to negative effects, and the implemented changes will be merely cosmetic rather than an influence on the organization's structure and culture (Benschop & Verloo, 2006). Projects run by management without knowledge can even increase gender inequality in the organization (Regnö, 2013).

A common way of initiating equality projects is to begin with awareness-raising efforts (cf. SOU, 2003:16). However, increased awareness of how gender inequality is done in an organization does not automatically make the organization staff more positive to change; it can also lead to new forms of resistance (SOU, 2003:16). The focus on raising awareness of gender inequality can also mean that the lack of awareness, rather than gender inequality per se, is identified as the problem that needs solving (Rönnblom, 2011). Thus, training sessions can be used as a strategy for fighting change, by shifting the focus from changing the organization to the training sessions (Rönnblom, 2011).

Despite the increasing amount of research from a gender perspective on the conditions and opportunities in organizations, the process of improving gender equality can still be slow (Ainsworth et al., 2010). Meagre progress despite the availability of new methods and tools, and many new projects, is not entirely attributable to the complexity of equality work, according to Amundsdotter et al. (2015). Slow progress is also due to a reluctance to change. Measures that reveal gender inequality

challenge an organization's structure and culture, and therefore provoke resistance (cf. Andersson et al., 2012).

In a study of efforts to increase diversity, Ahmed (2012) shows how an organization's need to prove the success of its efforts actually hampers real change. Procedures are focused on results that are quantifiable or can be shown, such as writing policy documents and exemplifications of diversity, whereas more long-term, effective actions have lower priority, since the results are hard to measure. Much of the time and resources allocated to equality and diversity are used to control and organize the work, while actual change takes a back seat (Keisu, 2012). The focus on structure, methods and tools becomes a form of resistance that risks reproducing inequalities (Fraser 2011). Eagerness to show determination and fast results means that efforts to understand the problem that needs remedying receives lower priority (Snickare, 2012). Without truly understanding where and how inequality arises in the organization, and what the process of change based on this understanding entails, no real change can be achieved (Rönnblom, 2011; Tollin, 2011).

As described above, management is often identified as the key to success when changing an organization. But not many studies exist on how management can organize and implement the process in order to achieve sustainable change. What should the team actually do? What does it mean, for instance, to take responsibility for equality work? How does the team need to develop in order to be capable of doing what needs to be done? If awareness is not enough, what else is needed? We will examine and discuss these issues further in the chapter.

Initiative, Empirical Data and Method

The purpose of the initiative, "Cultural Change Through Leadership Development", was to provide the faculty's management team with the knowledge and tools they need to engage actively in gender equality work, which means to act according to a conscious gender equality strategy, and to encourage and facilitate a change-positive organizational culture. The initiative, which was designed by FRONT's research group on behalf of the management team, began with three meetings with the management

team on the topic of equality. The researchers also had one-to-one meetings with all heads of departments to discuss equality work within the different departments, what had been done, and what the biggest challenges were. The next step in the process was five workshop days on gender equality for the entire team. The group began with a 2-day workshop, met again after three months for a 1-day workshop, and concluded with a 2-day workshop after a further three months.

The initiative was inspired by both the research on leadership and gender equality described above, and by the action research methodology described in greater detail in the introduction to Part 3 of this book. In the workshops, short lectures on gender and organization focusing on academia were alternated with reflection, exercises and homework. This theoretical knowledge was reflected on and used to structure the participants' experiences, as well as observations from their own organization that constituted the homework.

The analysis in this chapter is based mainly on qualitative material in the form of interviews and notes from the five workshop days. The two researchers who led the workshops took notes by hand throughout the workshops. At the end of each workshop day, they went through their individual notes and combined them into a joint field diary. Flipchart sheets and other material produced by the participants as a group were collected and documented in the field diary. In addition to the field diary, the empirical data for this chapter consists of individual participant interviews. These semi-structured interviews were carried out one year after the workshop series ended. They lasted for one to two hours and were recorded and transcribed.

The analysis began with an inductive approach to the material, which was examined several times to identify recurring themes in the form of similarities and differences. Coding was based on the informants' own descriptions. In the next phase, the material was interpreted according to the critical sensemaking theory described in the next part of this chapter. In our analysis, we look at the role of the management team – what it can do in practice – in implementing a sustainable equality process in the organization, and how the team needs to evolve in order to be capable of doing this.

Sensemaking and Sensegiving

That organizations change constantly is an established fact within organizational research today. However, discussion continues on the pros and cons of the two most common perspectives of change – planning and organizing, respectively (cf. Iveroth & Hallencreutz, 2016). The planning perspective studies the failures discovered in the current situation, and presents a plan for how to achieve the desired result. Management's role in this perspective is to plan the change, handle resistance in the transition phase, and follow up the outcome. The organization is then expected to stabilize in its new situation before embarking on the next planned change (Cf. Lewin, 1951).

The organizing perspective involves seeing organizations as evolving and in perpetual motion. Change is the normal state and takes place, for instance, in the form of interactions during day-to-day activities: in actions and formal or informal meetings, for example when colleagues discuss business or chat around the coffee machine. Management's role in the organizing perspective is primarily to make sure that strategies for change are comprehensible by applying various sensemaking and sensegiving processes (cf. Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Sensemaking has long been a popular approach in organization research, and consequently, there are several definitions. Brown et al. found that sensemaking is often described as "those processes by which people seek plausibility to understand ambiguous, equivocal or confusing issues or events" (Brown et al., p. 266). In his ground-breaking work, Weick defines sensemaking as having a number of interrelated characteristics: sensemaking is a *social*, *ongoing*, *identity-constructing* activity where participants *retrospectively enact* their surrounding environments from which they *exact cues* and make *plausible* sense (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Based on Weick's work, Mills et al. (2010) propose that we develop a critical sensemaking strategy (CSM) to acknowledge not only the broader macro/social context, but also the meso/organizational and micro/individual levels. By working with discourse (inspired by Foucault and critical discourse analysis), organizational rules and cultures, as well as what Unger (2004) calls "formative contexts", Mills et al. (2010) developed a model that addresses "how individuals make sense of their

environments at a local level while acknowledging power relations in a broader societal context" (Mills et al., 2010, p. 190). Formative contexts are institutional or individually created practices that serve as structures and thereby limit what can be done (Mills et al., 2010; Trubek, 1989), and consequently what is considered reasonable to do. Often, formative contexts become "natural" over time and are no longer questioned. CSM highlights the need to explore sensemaking as identity work, while recognizing that surrounding structures can greatly restrict these processes.

Sensegiving is an elaboration of the concept of sensemaking. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) describe it as "concerned with the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others, towards a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442).

Sensegiving is management's task – giving meaning to change – while the people in organizations, especially those in key positions, need to address sensemaking, that is, making sense of the changes, according to Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). While studying processes of change at a university in the USA, the two researchers developed a theory on how sensegiving and sensemaking undergo various strategic phases when an organization changes. In the first phase, sensegiving is initiated by the management of the organization. In dialogue with the management, it is then developed by key persons and becomes sensemaking for both management and the organization as a whole. Management can then proceed with sensegiving from a new level of sensemaking. Through multiple phases of sensegiving and sensemaking, the change is then disseminated via key persons to the organization in such a way that individuals and groups can integrate it, and both understand and accept it.

Weick and Quinn (1999) also emphasize that management's role in change is sensegiving, and that change can only be successful if it is perceived as interesting and attractive by those who are targeted. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) clarify management's central role in this process:

As a consequence of our revised perspective on strategic change initiation in terms of sensemaking and sensegiving, a different view of the top management's role during the beginning stages of change emerges. The CEO (and ultimately

the top management team) can be seen as architects, assimilators, and facilitators of strategic change. The acts of making sense of, and giving sense about, the interpretation of a new vision for the institution constitute key processes involved in instigating and managing change. (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991 p. 446)

From the above, we conclude that it does not suffice to plan and implement strategic change focused on cultural change and equality. We also need to focus on and create awareness of how sensemaking and sensegiving can create more understanding for change, and thus make it more enduring.

Two Workshops

So, what happens when theories on leadership and organizational change meet empiricism? We will now present a more concrete picture of the workshops with the management team, using one example from the early phase, and one from the late phase of the initiative, respectively.

The First Scene

"I was thinking about women and men. That we're biologically different."

"I wrote fairness. We're different, but the purpose of working with gender equality is that it should be fair. For example, biology shouldn't affect recruitment."

The first workshop has just started, and the participants, three women and eleven men, are looking at a wall full of post-it notes. The task for each is to think of five to eight words or sentences that come to mind when they hear the word "sex", and write them on post-its. The notes are stuck on the wall, and each person then presents their note by reading it aloud and commenting on why they chose those particular words. The mood is friendly and a bit giggly.

Nearly all the participants associate the word sex with physical bodies. Their comments include words like "women", "men", "similarities" and "differences", saying that women and men are biologically different, and that the word sex first of all makes them think of sexual attraction and

the relationship between men and women, or reproduction and giving birth.

Many also chose words and terms such as gender equality and equal rights, describing how they associate sex, i.e. gender, with working to achieve these goals. Others said they thought of how different women's and men's lives are: from education and recreational activities for kids and youths, to the gender-segregated labour market, and unequal distribution of labour at home. Several also mentioned cultural differences, such as what discussions are like depending on which gender dominates in numbers.

When participants were interviewed about the workshop, they referred to the post-it exercise, saying that they felt free to write and say what they wanted. Kristian, for instance, said he "feels that the atmosphere is very good – nobody just sits around and doesn't want to take part". Kari describes the same thing, saying that even though the workshop "was inconvenient timewise, and the theme was a bit heavy, but once you're there, everybody does their best. You discuss when it's time for discussion, and you help to keep the discussion going."

Several participants also say that they find the issue of equality hard. Stein says, "It's not at all easy to understand. Even with the best intentions, if you do things wrong nothing will get better – or at least, progress will be very slow." Wenche stresses that this is a difficult issue and that it's easy to make mistakes. She has the requisite competence now, but she didn't when the project started, and "without the skills you tend to resort to simple solutions that don't lead to sustainable results." Similarly, Olav describes equality work as a field where they previously found it hard to know what to do. He says, "I always have the urge to try to do something, but I didn't feel that it was so action-oriented." Kristian says almost the same thing, "I feel like we see it as a common challenge and that we constantly meet the challenge, and that we perhaps feel that we aren't doing enough." Management has agreed that they want equality, he says, but it's been hard to know what is needed, and what actions to take in order to combat any inequality.

The purpose of the exercise with post-it notes is to examine and bring the group's thoughts on the workshop theme out into the open. After the exercise, the FRONT project was presented, and the participants

introduced themselves and their expectations, before agreeing on how to proceed with the work.

The Second Scene

"All faculty management need the awareness and skills to work with gender equality."

"The recruitment process – every step from advertising to evaluation of candidates needs to be reviewed. For instance, we should discuss training for members of evaluation committees."

The third workshop is nearing its end, and participants work in groups of four. The atmosphere is focused and discussions are lively. The workshop began with the task of writing down all the issues they felt were important to address on flipchart sheets. These issues were then arranged according to themes that the participants worked on in groups. The areas that eventually emerged, in addition to leadership development and recruitment (see above), were career guidance and research strategies. Participants said that gender imbalance in the organization is partly a result of women and men not obtaining the same career support in the form of recommendations, invitations to networks, etc., in their daily working life. Increased awareness of how gender affects career guidance is therefore essential. Equality is also crucial in the faculty's research strategy. The management team must ensure that this is reflected in the recruitment.

I thought we were only going to discuss gender and equality – but we've talked about what is important for us now … the faculty's strategic issues. What we never have time to talk about at our Thursday meetings.

In the interviews after the workshops, participants describe how their views on gender equality work have changed. In the above quote, Olav says he no longer sees gender equality as a separate issue but more like a perspective on other issues, and part of the faculty's strategic work. Wenche describes how gender equality in the workshops "became a springboard or a starting point for other major issues".

Gender equality work in the sense of changing a culture entails a long-term approach. "Because it takes a long time for a cultural change to be accepted and gain legitimacy, you just have to keep on and on," says Kristian. Aksel agrees, "It's all those tiny drops – they can never achieve a radical difference, but I think they gradually turn things in another direction".

Seeing gender equality as a facet of the faculty's strategic work means that the participants perceive management's responsibility more clearly. "Firstly – as a leader you really need to have this on your agenda," says Wenche. "Management should be the trailblazers," says Silje. Aksel elaborates on management's responsibility, "Someone needs to own the perspective. You need someone to own the overarching problem". Taking responsibility for the issue as a leader is to "own the perspective", that is, to admit to a description of the organization as being unequal, and to state that gender equality is important to work on, says Aksel. He adds that he as a leader builds organizational culture through leading by example, "This is how we do things here". Stein also emphasizes management's responsibility. If management shows that the issue is important, the organization will follow suit. He says, "If management has the respect of the organization – when we say that gender equality is a serious issue, then it will be taken seriously."

Kari describes how the workshops have led to team-building in the management team. They had time to talk to each other. "Team-building, absolutely," Silje replies to the question of how the workshops impacted the management team. She describes how the nervousness she felt at the beginning of the first workshop was soon dispelled, "Okay, I felt … I'm not going to feel bad about taking them away from their work, because this was good". Kristian concurs. He says the workshop theme was important, but that it was also an opportunity for the management team to spend time together, which "had a team-building effect".

Knowledge for Change: A Description of the Workshop Series

The above scenes are from the 6-month series of workshops that the management team attended. At the start, several of the participants were

sceptical about which actions would lead to change. At the concluding workshop, however, there was serious readiness to take action. Although the changes that took place in the group's discussions are not entirely – or perhaps even primarily – attributable to the workshop series itself, descriptions of how awareness, and the subsequent ability to take action, developed in the group over 6 months will be discussed in relation to the series. We will not discuss other possible causes behind the changes, or the gender equality work that took place in the organization earlier, and which may have prepared the way for the workshops. As in all groups, the individual members already had diverse experiences, previous knowledge and agendas. The purpose of this text is to examine the actions of a management team. Therefore, the focus is on the group as a whole, not on individual members.

Knowledge: Shared and Created

> It feels like … I don't know what to do. That's a dilemma.
>
> (Interview with Aksel)

As a leader, Aksel is aware that he should be driving the efforts to improve gender equality at the faculty. This is expressed in policy documents and at meetings. But, as he says above, he doesn't know what he is supposed to do in reality, and that troubles him.

As described in the introduction to the third part of the book, our efforts on this project have focused on the doing-gender perspective. This means that gender – and thus, gender equality and inequality – is something that is done by individuals, mainly in relation to other individuals, but also separately. The doing is often automatic. We are so accustomed to it that we don't see, or think about, when it happens. Doing gender forms patterns and structures that in turn influence how we do gender. But the doing not only replicates these patterns – the way it is perpetually done either replicates or breaks down these patterns. When gender is done automatically, it follows the patterns, replicating them, while doing gender with awareness can either recreate the patterns or break them (cf. Gherardi, 1995; Kvande, 2003; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Similarly, a large part of what happens within an organization is taken for granted. Our behaviour is automatic and unreflective, or we "stick to the same procedure": when we recruit; celebrate that someone got a research grant; hold a department meeting; or plan a course. We often hear that "it's deeply ingrained". Adopting a "doing gender" approach in this project means examining and analyzing how these "deeply ingrained" attitudes impact the organization's gender equality. What happens if a routine is followed or not followed? What actions assert and enhance the routine, and what actions change it? What takes place in everyday interactions within the organization? What are the effects of individuals acting together and creating meaning or building smaller groups to cater to specific interests?

> I think that even if I felt it was demanding, it did something to me, having these meetings and that I was really forced to think seriously about my own opinions, how things are perceived, and how things are done.
>
> (Interview with Kari)

Kari describes her experience of the workshops as demanding. It is demanding, having to analyze her own thoughts, how things are perceived and done, and to see what happens in the organization. It is difficult and demanding, bringing "deeply ingrained" things into the open, to become aware of previously automatic behaviours. Aksel says that he "has trouble seeing his own bias". He does not question that he "does gender", for instance by treating and judging women and men differently. But he finds it hard to define how this happens, what he does specifically. This matches Stein's description in scene 1, and his statement that the equality issue "isn't that easy to understand", while Wenche says that "without the skills you tend to resort to simple solutions".

Developing a Now

> I am very data-driven. I'm always on the lookout for underlying causes, how bad it is, what the facts are, what we know about the mechanisms here.
>
> (Interview with Aksel)

When talking about the workshops, the participants stress that they were based on knowledge. Asked what he appreciated the most, for instance, Kristian says, "That it was knowledge-based". Wenche is even more specific, and says that having research and studies from other fields is not good enough, you need knowledge about your own particular organization, or even your own part of the organization, in order to get legitimacy, "because working for knowledge industries requires that you have knowledge about your own field. Even if you have loads of international studies, it's still not enough, and you have to create legitimacy in your own field in order for it to work".

A management team needs knowledge of the field where it wants to achieve change. In this instance, knowing where and how gender equality and inequality are done in their faculty. They need to know where and what needs to change for gender equality to increase, and how they should work to achieve it. During the workshops, this knowledge was developed in several ways: through lectures on gender theory and gender research; through the participants examining their own activities; and by sharing experiences and performing analyses together.

> But the seminars contributed to raising awareness, which I think was necessary in order to see what this is really about.
>
> (Interview with Silje)

Participants had opportunities to practice their ability to notice things in the organization that can have effects depending on gender. Observing what goes on at meetings improves the ability to notice things that are usually taken for granted: who talks; who listens to whom; how body language changes; who is included and excluded; who controls the agenda and formulates problems; who sits next to whom; who talks to whom during coffee breaks, etc. Observation is also one way of approaching problem formulation, in order to identify the actions and contexts that consolidate gender inequality.

Participants were asked to make observations individually prior to each workshop. At the workshops, they then reported on what they had done, what they had noticed, and their interpretation of what they had

seen and heard. Telling each other about their observations constituted the first analysis. The group then worked interactively in different constellations, sharing their experiences and thoughts, to explore patterns and variations.

> You get to hear the perspectives of your colleagues from departments with similar but not identical problems. And then you see that, "Well, we might have one or two challenges in common".
>
> <div align="right">(Interview with Olav)</div>

Gender theory provided participants with tools to analyze their own activities. As described in the introduction to part three, an adaptation of Acker's model (Acker, 1990, 1994) was used consistently in this project. The model helped participants to systematize their observations, which, in turn, enabled them to discover patterns and structures in everyday operations within the organization. In addition to assisting them in this examination, models and concepts from gender theory also provided a vocabulary for the phenomena they identified.

Studies with a gender perspective, based on empirical data from both the participants' own organization and other fields and activities, were also used to offer a better understanding of the participants' own activities. By comparing, noting similarities and differences, they could bring "deeply ingrained" behaviour into the open. Descriptions of gender inequalities in other organizations offer approaches and methods that can be used to examine phenomena in your own organization.

Working with your own discoveries, combined with listening to and reflecting on the discoveries, observations or research made by other participants – and together analyzing and highlighting patters from different angles, is one way of guiding a knowledge process on gender issues in organizations. It is often hard to discern how actions help establish patterns or enable alternative approaches. The learning itself takes time, and the material needs to be processed in several stages. It is comparable to the "development stage" in analogue photography (Amundsdotter, 2009).
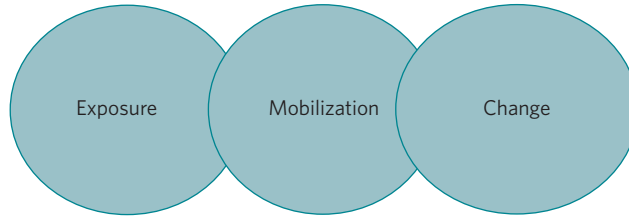
Figure 10.1. Model for change process, taken from Amundsdotter (2009).

In the first stage of the process towards change – development (Amundsdotter, 2009) – participants receive knowledge and generate new knowledge in group exercises. Knowledge that is provided in the form of gender theory, is used to analyze and systematize observations, producing new knowledge. Meanwhile, knowledge provided in the form of research articles, based on empirical studies within the organization and from other sources, together with the participants' own observations, is used to bring the "deeply ingrained" into the open.

Challenging ideologies and mindsets requires a collective effort. Hearing the examples and reflections of others enables participants to discover things in themselves or their everyday life that they may not otherwise have noticed. While a personal episode can seem like an exception, on hearing that several others have had the same experience we begin to see a pattern.

From Development to Mobilization

The development stage described above generated awareness of the organization's "current image", that is, the picture of the organization on which to base an analysis, and identify problems in relation to the desired result. This first stage is a period of learning and exploring how gender is done and given its meaning within the faculty. Development can take a long time or happen fast, but the "current image" that eventually emerges, the new picture of the organization, is the starting point for the next stage. Discoveries are summarized and compiled, and strategies for what needs to change are discussed and elaborated in stage two, mobilization (Amundsdotter, 2009).

But I think the underlying mechanisms of why things don't happen automatically have become much clearer to me. Because we now have more facts and awareness of what actually is.

(Interview with Kristian)

Several of the interviewees mention that not until they become aware of the underlying causes behind routines – why things are done in a certain way – can they see what needs to change, and also understand why change will encounter resistance. In the above quote, Kristian relates how the workshops have made him more aware of "the underlying mechanisms of why things don't happen automatically". Stein says that the workshops gave him "a clear and distinct picture of what the problem is". Olav agrees and says, "What we learned in these workshops is that we can't expect things to sort themselves out". Olav is describing an awareness that gender equality in the organization will not happen automatically. Something has to be done to achieve change.

On the final two workshop days, participants looked at these questions: What is the problem? In what contexts are undesirable situations reiterated? How can we understand what happens? What do we need to learn more about? It was important at this stage to allow time for deeper study and analysis, to achieve a clearer idea of how the change should be planned. Participants often want to move ahead to action and change directly, before studying and analyzing the matter properly, and to skip making a thorough analysis of "the underlying mechanisms". Several participants also described how hard it was to refrain from making action plans during the first two workshop sessions. Olav, for instance, says, "I felt we had discussions, and that we dealt with the themes, but what I wanted, I felt I always had the urge to try to do something, but I didn't feel that it was that action-oriented." He describes how the discussions triggered him to want to act after the workshops, that he wanted to do something. During the workshop, participants were told not to plan or discuss "action". Instead, they should start analyzing and describing the current situation in the defined problem areas, and to present examples of contexts where undesirable situations and gender inequalities are reproduced. The workshop concluded with a discussion of the problem

that had been defined together, and suggestions of what needed to be looked into more thoroughly.

After the first discussions, participants decided to focus in the first stage on four problem areas or themes: research strategy, recruitment, career guidance and leadership development. In the next stage, making plans for concrete change, the Acker model described above was used. Participants discussed what actions would lead to a new current situation. Should the change be achieved with: new procedures, a new culture, new patterns for interaction, or more awareness?

Based on the group's new awareness and observations, they embarked on both analyzing the areas that had been revealed in the process, and planning for concrete measures to achieve change. This was accomplished partly through reflecting on the questions above in order to find actions that could change the current situation. The last two days were different compared with the first workshops. Participants now focused on concrete issues related to their own organization. This was widely appreciated.

Plans for concrete measures were based on the knowledge and awareness gained during the previous two workshops. This includes knowledge of how gender is done and the effects it has on an organization, and how to examine the organization from a gender perspective. It also means how to continue creating new knowledge and awareness, but also knowledge on how changing the culture means doing things in new ways, and that this does not happen automatically, and always encounters resistance. Therefore, it must be implemented by management.

Leadership in Sustainable Work on Gender Equality

Sensegiving

The management team has agreed that its role in the faculty's gender equality work is important. This task includes being the *figurehead* for the process, according to Silje. If management demonstrates that "gender equality is important, then it will be taken seriously," says Svein. Legitimizing the work for gender equality is thus a key part of management tasks,

demonstrating that this is something that will actually be implemented. Organizations are fast-paced, and assignments come from many different levels, meaning that middle management feel that they do not always have time for everything that ends up on their plate. One key managerial skill, therefore, involves being able to prioritize tasks. Priorities are partly determined by who initiates the task, and whether the area it involves is a key issue in the organization (Kallifatides, 2002). Silje's description of leaders as figureheads for gender equality, and Svein's statement that equality is taken seriously if management establishes its importance, can be interpreted as them noticing that some issues and areas in the organization can be overlooked without incurring any major penalty. One task for management is to ensure that gender equality is not seen as one of these issues.

When the management team describes its approach to gender equality, they say that it is "on the agenda", or that they "own the perspective, the overall problem". They refer to gender equality as part of, or a perspective on, other issues. Olav, for instance, says that he thought that they would "just talk about gender and gender equality" at the workshops, but instead they discussed the faculty's strategic issues. Participants describe how they were given methods and tools in the course of the workshops to identify gender inequality. They have focused on some particular areas and now know how inequalities arise, whereas other areas remain unexamined. But these methods and tools make them feel confident about how to move on and start working on new areas.

A large share of an organization's equality work consists in demonstrating that equality is yet to be achieved (Ahmed, 2017). Denying that the organization is unequal can be one way of actively resisting gender equality. If the organization is already gender equal, no gender equality work is needed. Other issues can be prioritized instead. Resistance can also be passive, simply by accepting that the organization's unequal processes and structures are the normal, usual way of doing things. This makes inequality invisible. By stating that they believe gender equality should be "on the agenda" and that they should "own the perspective", management could be said to take responsibility for demonstrating that gender equality is a legitimate part of the organization's work. They

support the description of the organization as being not yet gender equal, and they show concrete examples of how and where inequalities exist.

Identifying processes and situations where inequalities exist, that is, demonstrating with concrete examples that gender equality strategies are necessary and important since gender equality is yet to be achieved, is one way for management to take responsibility for gender equality work. The *doing gender* perspective on organizations that has infused the FRONT project, however, entails that the organization's structure and processes are identified as being gendered. Gender is not something that is added but an integral part of everything that happens within the organization (Acker, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This process-oriented perspective on organizations – that gender is done continuously – means that organizations are regarded as constantly evolving, and that change is the normal state. This, in turn, means that the process of change has to be propagated and implemented at every level in the organization. If gender is *done* in everyday actions in the organization's processes, everyone involved must behave in a new way for change to be achieved. It is not sufficient that management changes its behaviour. In order for change to be successful in an organization that is constantly changing, the employees must consider it to be interesting and desirable. They have to be committed to working for change.

Therefore, a key role for management here is *sensegiving*, meaning influencing employees' *sensemaking*, their attitude to, and understanding of, the change (cf. Weick & Quinn, 1999). Individuals must experience change as meaningful, or at least not so threatening that it causes resistance and ambivalence. Sensemaking is linked to power in organizations, and critical sensemaking theory therefore also entails criticism of this power (cf. Mills et al., 2010). There are many ways of interpreting or "making sense" of one's role in an organization, but these are not presented neutrally by the organization. Some forms of sensemaking are promoted in the organization, and others are ignored or rejected. Even in fairly horizontal and democratic organizations, there is conflict over which sensemaking should prevail.

The management team describes their work with sensegiving in two ways. The first is to ensure that gender equality is a priority in the

organization; that it is not optional. The other is to acknowledge the picture of the organization as being unequal, both by having equality "on the agenda" and by "owning the perspective", that is, demonstrating how the equality perspective can be included in other issues. By clarifying their view of the organization, that gender is done and is integral to everything that takes place in the organization, and that it does not consider the organization to be gender equal, management gives legitimacy to the equality strategy.

Generating New Knowledge and Awareness

The management team is fast to take action, it wants to get things done. Participants can feel frustrated by seminars that focus on describing problems in depth and generating new knowledge and awareness, instead of planning and setting goals to act on. Olav, for instance, says he was disappointed with the first workshops because they weren't action-oriented. He had "the urge to try to do something". Taking the time to explore and understand how gender inequalities arise, however, is something that the management team later considered to be crucial to achieving sustainable change. "Without these skills, you tend to resort to simple solutions", says Wenche. Olav emphasizes that he needs to understand the "underlying causes", in order to initiate change. The management team, for instance, starts the work on the recruitment process by comparing experiences, reading up on research and ordering the organization to examine factors that they need to know more about. Not until then are they ready to decide on how to proceed. Several participants describe how their attitude to equality strategies has changed in the course of the project. When they came to the first workshop, they thought equality work was hard, since they didn't know how to approach it in practice. Aksel expresses this clearly, "I don't know what to do."

By examining, in the course of the project, how inequality is done in practice in the organization's processes, it becomes clear what needs to change and what the management team can do to achieve sustainable change. Change implemented without knowledge usually only leads to

cosmetic results and can even exacerbate gender inequalities (Benschop & Verloo, 2006; Regnö, 2013). Wahl et al. (2001, 2018) have an expression for the attitude behind equality strategies that lack an understanding of how inequality is done in organizations: "It will sort itself out". Setting goals, starting projects and making changes in only parts of a process can lead to temporary improvements in the organization's gender balance, for instance, according to Wahl et al. If the organization lacks awareness of what is to be achieved and how to get there, it will seek to return to what was previously considered to be the normal state of affairs. When the goal is no longer in focus and the project ends, "it will sort itself out".

But it is not sufficient that management knows how inequality is done in the organization. The process-oriented approach to organizations that doing gender entails means that change has to be implemented at every level. Knowledge of where and how gender inequality is done in the organization, and what needs to change in order to achieve gender equality, must permeate the entire organization.

The management team increased its knowledge and awareness of how gender inequality is done by applying gender theory as a tool. This included an adaptation of the Acker model (Acker, 1990, 1994) to support systematic observation in order to identify patterns and structures. Also, studies with a gender perspective, such as descriptions of how inequality is done in other organizations, were used to examine and interpret what happens within their own. Examining the routine activities of your organization, along with thinking about and listening to the observations or research of other participants, and then looking at patterns together, is one way of increasing knowledge and awareness.

The management team opted to apply a uniform type of knowledge process throughout the organization. As described in the introduction to part three, the doing gender perspective and an adaptation of the Acker model (1990, 1994) was used consistently in this project to examine how gender is done in organizations. This is not the only, or perhaps even the best, way of looking at gender. However, by choosing a perspective and a method that are relatively easy to understand and implement, and can be communicated and applied in the process by the staff in their faculty,

the management team has provided a coherent platform to work from. Gender equality is an issue that affects everyone in the organization on a personal level, an issue everyone has some kind of experience of and thus usually an opinion about. This makes it hard to build consensus around a common knowledge base for further work. When management contributes to the knowledge base, through training that teaches a gender perspective and a method that all employees can implement in their day-to-day activities, this enables change on all levels.

Sharing Responsibility

As explained above, applying sensegiving and communicating a method for identifying where and how inequality is done in the organization means that management takes an active part in the equality strategy. Gender equality is often perceived as a difficult problem by management. This is a new field for many, and equality issues often encounter resistance. Addressing gender inequality in an organization means working with complex processes of change (Amundsdotter et al., 2015; Benschop & Verloo, 2006; Regnö, 2013). Bringing inequality out into the open challenges the organization's structure and culture, and therefore provokes resistance (Andersson et al., 2012; Wahl et al., 2015). How can the management team state clearly both that the organization is not gender equal and that equality strategies are important?

Several participants use the word team-building to describe the effects of the workshops. Their answers vary when asked who they consider to be in charge of the management team's gender equality strategy. The participants also give examples of how the process is promoted in different areas in addition to this gender equality project: in management team meetings; in budgeting; in staffing; in the departments; in research; and in working with teaching and student recruitment. More than half of the participants are identified by others as promoting the process in various ways.

Our results indicate that if management feels that responsibility for the equality strategy is shared, then they take a more active and managerial role. The group can share the responsibility because they have increased their knowledge and awareness of gender equality and strategies together.

It is our view that management needs team-building in order to take charge of their gender equality strategies.

Gender Equality: A Strategic Issue

Many of the participants report that their attitude to gender equality work has changed during the workshops. Equality is no longer a separate and difficult issue but a starting point for other issues. This will be a starting point that adds to strategic issues, which means discovering new ways to achieve goals, new solutions. All interviewees describe this as being positive. Their expectation was that they would simply discuss gender equality, a field that most of them were uncomfortable with, but discussions instead encompassed the faculty's strategic issues, the issues they never have time to talk properly about, from a new perspective.

Our results indicate that discovering that gender equality is integral to, or an element of, the faculty's *strategic issues* is reassuring to the participants. The management team is used to handling such issues. Knowing that these are the areas where they can and should address gender equality makes equality work both concrete and easy to understand.

Conclusion

The management team's task in gender equality work can be described by the term sensegiving, as influencing employees' *sensemaking*, meaning their attitude to and understanding of gender equality work (cf. Weick & Quinn, 1999). Since gender equality and inequality are done through everyday actions in the organization's processes, the entire organization needs to be engaged in any changes. The management team can approach sensegiving by prioritizing gender equality work, by legitimizing the perception of the organization as not being gender equal, and by demonstrating how a gender equality perspective can be integrated in the organization's processes. They can also contribute to the organization's knowledge, awareness, and readiness to take action by choosing a perspective on, and a method for, gender equality work that all employees can implement in their regular activities.

Driving gender equality work in this way requires the management team to develop actions together as a team, and clearly recognize that the responsibility is shared by all. This also requires knowledge and awareness, knowing that they are qualified to deal with the issue. The methods and tools they acquired in the workshop series have not only given them knowledge about areas they have already addressed, but also the confidence to determine how to proceed in new areas. Awareness that gender equality is an integral part of our perspective on the faculty's strategic issues further reinforces their work.

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