

FESTA-GARCIA Joint Final Conference

Gendering organizations: dealing with resistances

7-8 November 2016, Brussels

OUTLINE

- WP7: Dealing with Resistance
- Handbook on Resistance to Gender Equality in Academia
- Online Toolkit

WP7: DEALING WITH RESISTANCE

In FESTA Project, one of the work packages (WP7) which was led by Istanbul Technical University aimed:

- to present a deeper understanding of resistance against structural change to gender equality in academic institutions
- to study levels, forms, directions, and aspects of resistance coming from men and women as well as the organisations, and the ways resistance operates
- to explore different ways of dealing with resistance.

DEFINITION OF RESISTANCE

Within the framework of FESTA activities resistance is defined as **opposition to the change** that implementation of gender equality policies promotes.

HOW GENDER INTERSECTS WITH RESISTANCE TO CHANGE?

FESTA project started with the understanding that patriarchies produce resistance against equality struggles (FESTA, 2012).

Organizational resistance to change is a key reason for the ineffective implementation of gender mainstreaming (Benschop and Verloo, 2006).

Processes of mainstreaming gender into organizations are likely to face particular resistance (Días González, 2001) because the changes that gender mainstreaming requires actually challenge the norms, practices, and assumptions concerning the power relations between men and women that work at the individual, cultural and organizational levels.

METHODOLOGY

- The basic data collection methodology for WP7 was to record the resistance incidents (Total:51) that project members encountered during the course of FESTA activities
- The partners then analyzed these resistance cases and crafted recommendations to deal with them
- Finally we prepared a **handbook on resistance** addressed to change agents and researchers engaged in gender equality projects.

HANDBOOK ON RESISTANCE TO GE IN ACADEMIA

Contents:

- a framework of resistance
- main causes and the indicators as well as the forms and symptoms of resistance
- list of recommendations for handling resistance
- analysis of the collected data (31 of the recorded cases) to diagnose the forms, causes and actors of the resistance cases encountered during FESTA activities as well as the suggested strategies to use in each case
- Discussion

MAIN CAUSES AND INDICATORS OF RESISTANCE

3.1 SENSITIVITIES AND RISKS

Confidentiality, Insecurity, Anxiety
Mistrust
Loss of Face

3.2 STATUS QUO

Threat to Job Status
Threat to Meritocracy
Conformity
Conflict of Methodologies

3.3 LIMITED RESOURCES

Financial Resources
Human Resources
Time Burdens

3.4 GENDERED AGENDA

Lack of Gender Awareness / Gender Blindness
Uncomfortable with Gender Equality/Fear of Gender
Issues/ Gender Hostility

3.5 PROBLEMS RELATED TO SUSTAINABILITY

Slow Improvement
Being Tired/ Feeling Hopeless
Changes of Position-Holders
Illusion of Having Done Enough

3.6 PERSONAL TRAITS

Low Motivation/Lack of Interest
Low Priority
Lack of Engagement
Lack of Self-Confidence
Looking for Benefit/Profit

FORMS AND SYMPTOMS OF RESISTANCE

Active-Passive:

specific actions that aim to prevent an implementation vs. the act of withdrawal from an action to prevent it.

Explicit-Implicit:

an apparent and open kind of opposition vs. one that is obscure and harder to recognize.

Gender specific-Non Gender specific.

the kind of behavior aimed to prevent an implementation for gender equality vs. one which creates various kinds of other obstacles for the project

WHO IS RESISTING?

Individual/Group Resistance:

single person /collection of individuals.

Institutional /Personal Resistance:

institutional culture or institution's legal or administrative procedures/a person's/ position holder's particular motives, traits, sensitivities, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEALING WITH RESISTANCE

The main groups of recommendations of this handbook concern :

- **the institutionalization, diversity and inclusivity to facilitate change towards gender equality and help sustainability**
- **effective communication and dissemination of the intended changes in and outside of institutions**
- **networking and collaboration in order to strengthen the position of the project as well as empower those who are committed to change**
- **enhancing the capacity for change**
- **improving teamwork and methodology.**

They were formulated with the intention to involve the structural, cultural and personal factors by combining the ideas drawn from the literature with those of the partners inspired by the resistance they faced during the FESTA procedures.

ANALYSIS OF THE STORIES

WOMEN ARE NOT BORN FOR SCIENCE

An active, Gender Specific, Explicit resistance from an Individual

During a kick-off dinner one of the participants commented nastily on a point our team member had made about career programs at our university during a presentation earlier that day. He said that no matter how much we thought that women could be trained for a career in science there was never going to be any room for them, simply because women are not cut out for science. He then launched into a long and heated monologue about women not being born and bred for maths and science studies giving several examples of how he thought males were suited for science and women not. For instance, women had done nothing during their childhoods other than play with dolls thereby losing all rights and skills for science, whereas boys played and practiced with mathematical, mechanical and electrical toys, thus becoming ready and worthy.

Why did the resistance happen?

Gendered Agenda*: Gender hostility, Uncomfortable with gender equality

Status Quo**: Threat to meritocracy, Conformity

HOW TO DEAL: RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutionalization, Diversity & Inclusivity:

④ Provide and make visible up-to-date quantitative data on gender equality indicators in the organization

⑤ Engender scientific excellence and promote the good for all perspective

⑥ Develop measures/structures for ensuring a commitment to gender mainstreaming and an organizational culture that values gender equality

Communication & Dissemination:

④ Introduce the project more as an endeavor dealing with the general “university environment” rather than solely with “gender” or women

⑤ Provide evidence about the success of interventions related to gender issues.

IN CONCLUSION

- The resistance cases recorded by the FESTA consortium and the analysis of these narratives provided us with important insights on the intersecting dynamics of resistance and the change process.
- From the analyses resistance appeared to be a most complex phenomenon. In some of the cases we experienced difficulties regarding interpretations. Between the partners who reviewed the same narrative, differences of opinion could be observed at times about the causes or remedies. The complex nature of resistance was, therefore, reflected in the multiplicity of the recommendations it necessitated.
- Contextual differences created another difficulty in formulating recommendations. It was neither possible to know the institutional characteristics in each case nor craft miracle formulas to fit all.

- Efforts to deal with resistance involve different levels of intervention with different structures and different results. Some of these interventions may prove effective in a relatively short time while some of the others can only be expected to work in the future. It is necessary to use both levels as well as formal and informal processes to succeed. We therefore proposed i.e. to involve people with strong positional power, commitment and willingness in the project teams as well as giving priority to reach PhD students and research assistants in different projects/programs.
- Finalizing the process of change depends on the bottom-top combination of policies. Enhancing the gender awareness and willingness to dedicate more resources of the university management was one of our recommendations for creating the capacity for change. We knew, however, that when the culture/people in the institution are not ready to respond to the demands of equality, measures from the top will also be useless. Therefore, such inclusivity measures as involving more women and men in the organization in gender equality work or organizing enthusiastic kick-off meetings to engage the whole institution, creating awards, etc. for disseminating gender awareness were among the recommendations.

So, change is a challenging process

which involves the interplay of many agents. Moreover, academic working environments have their own organizational cultures and structures which differ extensively even within themselves. Gendered dynamics in an academic work environment are not only related to the organizational culture but also to the social and cultural dynamics in general. Any project to implement change to create gender equality in academia should foresee the resistance provoked by such dynamics and take the necessary precautions.

THANK YOU