

Integrating Gender Equality into Business and Management Education

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This comprehensive edited volume has been recently published in a book series supported by Greenleaf Publishing and developed by the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative. The PRME Working Group on Gender Equality was established in 2011, of which the editors are co-facilitators. The book is the first of two under the theme of "Gender Equality as a Challenge for Business and Management Education". It is structured in five thematic parts:

- (1) Trends and challenges in management education.
- (2) Disciplinary perspectives.
- (3) Institutional perspectives.
- (4) International perspectives.
- (5) Pedagogical approaches.

Across its 22 chapters, the book offers a detailed and engaging collection of material covering a range of contexts and perspectives that both makes the case for the integration of gender equality in to business and management education and shows how this has been done in practice.

Following a well-defined introduction from the editors, Part 1 comprises four chapters. The first, by Kilgour, sets the current landscape of the topic by discussing *Gender inequality in management education: Past, present and future*. Combining an academic literature review of publications since the 1970s with an exploration of themes that have received prominent media coverage in more recent years, three issues are identified and unpacked: salary discrimination in business schools, sex-role stereotyping in the curriculum and harassment and violence. This chapter is particularly good at revealing examples of the institutional (pay and career progression), pedagogical (teaching content and style) and social (acceptance of unacceptable behaviour) drivers towards inequality; these are themes that echo across many different institutional contexts, not just business schools, which only strengthens the case that tackling gender inequality head on in our own institutions will permeate others as our students and colleagues move on. Indeed, the third chapter co-authored by Haynes and Murray demonstrates the unfulfilled potential of *Sustainability as a lens to explore gender equality: A missed opportunity for responsible management*. The sustainability imperative, increasingly embedded in business and management discourse



and embodied in the UN PRME initiative, offers an opportunity to position gender equality front and centre. Yet this chapter finds that the signatory schools demonstrate limited integration of gender equality, based on a detailed analysis of their Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) reports. Despite gender equality being “inherent in the social justice dimensions of sustainability requiring intra- and intergenerational equity” (p. 77), it is not recognised as something that requires direct attention. This lack of recognition is something that especially rings true in my own experience and is a recurring theme throughout the material in this book.

The second chapter, *Gender equality in business schools: The elephant in the room*, co-authored by Flynn with Cavanagh and Bilimoria, focuses on the structural issues affecting business schools in the USA, notably the numeric trends of female faculty members and graduates. The figures are startling, particularly in relation to senior faculty and administrative positions, for example, in 2012/2013, 80.7 per cent of deans were men compared with 19.3 per cent women (p. 30). In the same year, only 20.8 per cent of chair positions were held by women (p. 31). The authors call first and foremost for a recognition that there is an issue of under-representation (*acknowledge the elephant in the room*, p. 43), with four subsequent recommendations for change including support for women faculty, appointment of women leaders, recruitment of female students and creation of an environment in which all can thrive. The environmental recommendation stood out as the most important, albeit the hardest to achieve. The ability to sanction against weak practice is very difficult, especially where actions are not legally discriminatory but discriminatory nonetheless. This is a theme that is carried into the fourth chapter of this part of the book, using the metaphor of *Cleaning our houses*, authored by Verbos and Kennedy. Of particular note in this quantitative study is the finding that gender equity is positively related to psychological safety: “it is not simply the numbers of women that change the status quo. Rather, it is important to practice gender equity and both procedural and distributive justice” (pp. 91-92).

Part 2 of the book offers specific perspectives from four disciplines: marketing (Chapter 5, by Hein); nursing (Chapter 6, by Rothausen and Bazarko); law (Chapter 7, by Cecchi-Dimeglio); and organizational behaviour (OB) (Chapter 8, by Dever and Mills). In Chapter 5, Hein synthesises the wide-ranging discipline of “marketing” to demonstrate the multiple and intersectional issues of gender. She situates the relationship between the development of the discipline and the lived experience of the consumer as consuming both products and social identities. In doing so, she reveals a nexus of difficulty in integrating gender equality into business and management education; students and staff are confronting different lived experiences that expose multiple, conflicting and unequal levels of gender inequality, creating a disparity in the recognition of whether something is a problem or not. Marketing reveals this particularly profoundly, as it pervades almost all aspects of social life underpinned by discourses of growth and consumption.

Chapters 6 and 8 examine leadership. Rothausen and Bazarko offer a case study of the implementation of an executive education programme for nurse leaders in the USA. Nursing is “a vital, highly gendered industry” (p. 122), with high turnover and shortage of nurses. It has been found that managers and colleagues can improve engagement and retention, but leadership development opportunities rely on the willingness of healthcare organisations to fund and release nurses to participate. From an OB perspective, Dever and Mills found that whilst women are more represented as leaders in textbooks, leadership themes continue to be masculinised:

[. . .] if women do choose to take on a leadership role they are torn between acting in such a way that can be described as masculine, and be condoned for doing so, or act in a feminine manner that has them contributing to and continuing the gender stereotypes (p. 178).

In Chapter 7, Cecchi-Dimeglio also touches upon leadership in the legal profession in the context of women's career progression, demonstrating that a disconnection between legal education and the legal profession contributes to disparities between the achievements of female and male students and in their law careers. These chapters reveal the subtle, embedded ways in which gender stereotypes may be reinforced in certain professions.

Part 3 begins with two optimistic chapters with emphasis on concrete actions. The first, *It can be done!* by Godwyn and Langowitz, presents a set of interventions that, through detailed review and analysis, have been shown to reduce the influence of gender prejudice. Their "formula" (p. 200) includes: the creation of supportive learning communities for women; programmes in which participation represents a commendation and honour; exposure to positive role models; inclusion of women in areas customarily dominated by men; and an environment where success is recognised as emerging from action rather than an indescribable X factor. Nonetheless, as a reader, one question remained as to whether such a formula could genuinely create gender equality across all organisations in which it was applied; this is, no doubt, a fascinating issue that merits more discussion than the boundaries that a book chapter would perhaps allow. However, I agree with the authors' conclusion that it is the will more than the way that is preventing greater equality. Susan Adams also presents a case study that moves *From theory to practice: A university promoting gender equality in business* (Chapter 10). It offers an overview of activities and programmes undertaken by Bentley University in its pursuit of gender equality, including institution, student and corporate-driven work, but above all "persistence and focus" (p. 214) is continually required. Great strides have been made; however, the piece identifies the challenges of "funding, faculty and staff enthusiasm and student engagement" (p. 212) as needing repeated attention, echoing the findings of Godwyn and Langowitz.

Chapters 11 and 12 of this part are also evaluative, focusing on specific institutions as in Chapter 10. In Chapter 11, Bendl *et al.* provide a longitudinal evaluation of 12 years of teaching diversity management at the Vienna University of Economics. Many important lessons are identified in this piece; however, perhaps the most notable was the influence of the zeitgeist on the legitimization of the field – that "while current demographic trends foster an organizational interest in know-how on gender and diversity [...] such forces cannot be expected at every point of time" (p. 233). I think recognition of and response to this is particularly relevant in the context of a student body that frequently does not perceive gender inequality in their lived experiences. Indeed, Chapter 12 by Nentwich and Sander discuss the challenge of *Finding the right balance between "integration" and "marginalization"* for gender and diversity in management education. At the University of St Gallen, a dedicated "Gender and Diversity Study Program" (p. 239) is offered as part of the contextual studies' block accounting for 25 per cent of courses delivered at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Whilst this means that "it is still possible today to graduate from the University of St Gallen without ever having engaged with gender and diversity topics" (p. 242), it is found that the presence of the program is still "an entrance ticket for a marginalized field to enter the field of management education in the first place" (p. 244). I am inclined to agree. By having specific modules or programmes with "gender and diversity" in their title, it signals to students that these are issues of importance in the field of business and management, even if this does not seem to ring true compared with their own lived experiences to date.

By delivering four international perspectives, Part Four reminds us of the differences in gender equality meanings and practices across cultures. Using examples from Latin America (Chapter 13, by Idrovo Carlier); France (Chapter 14, by Finstad-Milion and Morin-Estèves); India and the USA (Chapter 15, by Moore, Rajadhyaksha and Blake-Beard); and

Japan (Chapter 16, by Kondo), the authors identify the specific, local contexts of business and management education in relation to broader gender identities and career expectations. Idrovo Carlier examines the nature of disparity in enrolment in MBA programmes. Kondo also explores the role of the MBA for women in Japan, where a government economic policy has driven the increase in the number of women in the labour force. Finstad-Milion highlights the role of French management schools in both addressing and preparing students for an unequal labour market (echoing some of the issues raised by Cecchi-Dimeglio in Chapter 7). Through a curriculum audit, Moore *et al.* find an insufficient focus on gender diversity in management education in the US and Indian business schools. I felt that this served to support the restricted optimism of Part Three, that there are individual examples of good practice but these become hidden in a dominating swathe of silence on the topic.

The final part of the book offers six reflections on teaching gender equality in practice. Chapters 18 (by Hall and Peat) and 21 (by Kwerder and Özkaznç-Pan) explore the restructuring of pedagogical practice as a holistic intersection of teaching, learning and pastoral engagement. Hall and Peat particularly explore the gendered nature of academic identity, academic practice and student engagement. Students and academics have expectations of their roles and the content of material that are gendered and challenged by the experiences of academia, creating necessary negotiation for all. Developing this further, Kwerder and Özkaznç-Pan propose the business school as a *locus* through which social change can be driven through the integration of *Feminist interventions in management education*. They demonstrate that gendered expectations can be transformed through MBA programmes in particular, so that “teaching ethics” becomes “ethical teaching” (p. 376). Through their example of re-reading of a case study of the 2012 Tazreen Fashions Factory Fire, I could connect ways in which I could build this into my own practice, moving from a standard, narrow approach of demonstrating strategies of blame and repair of organisational reputation to a broader discussion of the structural context of the event.

Chapters 17, 19, 20 and 22 by Wahl, Bilimoria, Arnold and Foster and Bevelander and Page respectively, focus on specific methods for integrating gender equality into teaching practice. Wahl offers two “methods to challenge resistance to gender” (p. 319):

- (1) the Gender Equality Index, in which a scale is used to promote discussions of gendered situations; and
- (2) reflective role plays, in which different character positions can be enacted.

Bilimoria’s work echoes that of Nentwich and Sander (Chapter 12) in evaluating an elective MBA course on Women in Organisations, with five key reflections:

- (1) “gender equality in management education must be deliberately fostered” (p. 352);
- (2) “gender reflexivity helps both female and male students examine privilege” (p. 353);
- (3) “a psychologically safe classroom environment is a key element of the course’s effectiveness” (p. 354);
- (4) “providing opportunities for voice, self-awareness and relational skill building is vital” (p. 355); and
- (5) “enabling gender equality in management education requires more than a single elective course” (p. 355).

Chapters 20 and 22 focus on the importance of experiential learning. Arnold and Foster evaluate the effects of active learning experiences on an elective MBA module designed

based on Kolb's stages of experiential learning, including film discussion and group activities. Bevelander and Page also discuss an all-women elective MBA module that involves climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, as a metaphor for *Women's ascent of organizations*. The elective nature of these modules perhaps indicates a body of students for whom gender equality is accepted within business and management education, and arranging to climb a mountain may be outside the scope of most business schools. However, the notion of creating experiences to deepen students' understanding is of great value.

I am pleased to have read this book, as it lends itself to both a comprehensive read and to a more selective approach according to particular interests and themes. I do, however, continue to be frustrated that such material is needed. Why is it that in a book published in 2015 (not 1955), several chapters of the volume outline the problem of gender inequality in business and management education, making the case that this is still an issue that needs to be addressed? Many examples in my experience both inside and outside academia highlight the need for more comprehensive discussion on this area because gender equality is far from integrated in business and management education; it is frequently marginalised at best and denigrated at worst. The concluding comments by the editors offer three interconnecting areas through which interventions can be developed: research, practices and policies. I would perhaps encourage the expansion of the "practice" and "policy" areas to focus on not only pedagogical practice and institutional-level policy but also individual academic practice. In addition to institutions signing up to the Principles of PRME, there seems to be a requirement for professional development for us as academics to recognise and challenge our own gender biases in relation to each other (within academia and without). This has the potential to increase the necessary "will" to implement all of the evident "ways" of improving the integration of gender equality in business and management education.

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