



# SECTION IV.

## Media Education

### 10. Gender Mainstreaming in Media and Journalism Curricula<sup>127</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

The Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) Section 'J' on women and the media, called the attention on the centrality of media and ICTs for gender equality. Echoing the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the 47th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2003 noted the responsibility of these industries to end the discrimination of women. More recently, the Sustainable Development Goal 5 also referred to the role of media and ICTs in women's empowerment.

Recommendations emerging from these initiatives include: combating sexist representations in media and ICT content; equal access and participation of women in media and ICTs industries, particularly to foster the participation of women in decision-making positions; access of women and girls to ICTs; development of gender sensitive media and ICT policy; and the promotion of media and information literacy programs for women and girls.

However, progress has been slow and some areas have moved backwards - for example, the extended proliferation of violence against women in media and digital representations. One potential reason for the lack of progress is the absence of gender mainstreaming in higher education and of curricula that are gender sensitive within media and journalism programs globally. The institutions involved prepare

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future media and ICT professionals and journalists. Changes in curricula must be relevant to, and meet the needs of, communication and information industries whilst also educating emerging media and journalism practitioners to understand the importance of creating gender sensitive media structures and content. To date, they have often concentrated on technological innovation, but not on the implications of the production of content for gender equality or on the importance and significance of gender equity processes, or understanding of participation (and barriers to it) for gender equality.

## EVIDENCE

Since the publication of the Beijing Plan of Action (BPFA) in 1995, institutional efforts were concentrated in combating sexist stereotypes in media and ICT content. Gender sensitivity in media and journalism education was not regarded as the starting point to change media content and operations. It has been thanks to the influence of feminist scholars who, in linking with activists and women media workers, that public attention has been drawn to this issue, and that education has been recognized as a strategic domain to promote change. Most recently, the UNESCO UNITWIN University Network on Gender Media and ICTs has been highlighting the centrality of gender mainstreaming in the curricula of communication and journalism schools, to combat gender inequality in those institutions and the industries they feed.

To teach gender issues in journalism and communication schools has to do with understanding the construction and impact of the gendered production of media content, and also with the status of women in newsrooms, professional career opportunities, equal pay and eradication of sexual harassment, among other issues (North, 2010).

According to Gertseema (2014), gender mainstreaming in journalism was adopted first by the Inter Press Service News Agency, which implemented this policy in 1994 to improve gender equality in both media structures and news content.

Following this, together WACC and the IFJ launched the *Learning Resource Kit for*

*Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy* in 2012, a resource to promote gender ethical journalism. The kit is based on the insights of media practitioners, educators and scholars from all regions of the world. It includes guidelines for gender equality in media contents and encourages dialogue within media structures and self-regulatory bodies and NGOs.

Implementing the gender mainstreaming principle in the media and journalism education field, relates to a diversity of dimensions:

- Institutional normative framework – gender equality and gender mainstreaming principles implemented throughout the curricula; including through the adoption of a code and/or mechanisms to prevent discrimination, unequal treatment, and harassment, as well as to foster gender-responsive pedagogical approaches and consistent content.
- Promotion of parity of male and female students and scholars at schools, in all activities and programs.
- Curricula development and course content – existence of gender specific courses within programs that should be planned through a gender-sensitive perspective.
- Teaching/learning - lecturers and students training on feminist theories and methodologies, also building on the richness of gender analyses and approaches.
- Learning materials – inclusion of texts, readings and pedagogical materials on gender equality, gender analysis, intersectionality.
- Assessments – gender equality as a standard criteria in university assessment tools.
- Research/publications – draw upon/foster and support research and publications that focus on gender in media and communication (Made, 2009), with the inclusion of publications and research that was written by both women and men.

Using this model, the South African NGO GenderLinks conducted an audit of gender equality in media and journalism education in two Namibian universities, including with funding from UNESCO. Findings revealed lack of a formal gender policy at the institutional level and the absence of gender mainstreaming in the curricula. They also showed a dearth of gender specific courses and a lack of mechanisms to mainstream gender into undergraduate programs. The audit made evident that the incorporation of gender-related issues mostly depends on the lecturer's own knowledge and on her/his feminist interests (Made, 2009); a situation that resembles the broader reality of media and journalism courses across the world.

Indeed, similar results were found by North (2010) in a national study which included 30 universities in Australia. According to the study, no academic journalism program in Australia offers courses that address the portrayal of women in the media, neither gendered media culture nor gendered production of content. A few of them just include some aspects of gender in unit synopses. Also, women students outnumber men in communication and journalism programs in a ratio of approximately 2:1. However, according to North (2010, p. 104) there is an institutional resistance to including feminist theoretical or critical pedagogies in Australian journalism curricula. Thus, the lack of gender mainstreaming in curricula seems to be the consequence not only of the beliefs, values, knowledge and experiences of the course developers, but also of the patriarchal structure that resists the introduction of a feminist perspective in teaching (North, 2010).

Although there are exceptions, in most cases female students outnumber male students, and yet, when they enter the professional field, women tend to have less status. They occupy the lower-income positions and have difficulty reaching parity within media and ICT industries - including in gaining senior and managerial roles in media organizations - which, in turn, has an impact in media content.

This raises the question of why there is still resistance to introducing gender mainstreaming in the curricula of journalism and communication schools. North offers some insight into the importance of gender mainstreaming:

*To find reasons why journalism education should embrace gender in its curriculum, one just has to ask why men dominate in the editorial hierarchy. Why is sexual harassment a continuing problem in the newsroom and effectively unaddressed by media organizations? Why is there a disproportionate number of men graded higher than women of equivalent industry experience? And why are women more cynical about the industry?' (North, 2010: 111).*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the evidence, the UNESCO UNITWIN University Network on Gender Media and ICTs calls on governments, member states, UN agencies, universities, researchers, civil society organizations and media and ICT industries to implement the actions listed below:

- A policy and a plan of action on gender equality should be in place/adopted by universities, particularly where journalism and communication programs are offered.
- All universities should guarantee gender mainstreaming in their journalism and communication programs (as per the above dimensions) with a special attention to digital transformations that have gendered implications for the profession.
- Gender mainstreaming practices need to incorporate intersectional approaches to ensure a fully inclusive educational offer.
- With the support of the universities represented at the UNESCO UNITWIN University Network on Gender Media and ICTs, there is a need to promote the exchange of expertise, knowledge, materials and best practices for the development of gender-sensitive curricula in journalism and communication.

- Governments, Member States, UN agencies, and universities should allocate adequate resources should conduct research on gender equality in journalism and communication teaching programs, in view of strengthening a gender-aware approach to the educational offer.
- Through curricula that embed gender mainstreaming, there is a need to train gender-aware next generation professionals to contribute to implementing gender equality principles and gender equal practices in both media structures and content.
- Universities should conduct gender-focused monitoring of students' performance during education and after graduation.

## RESOURCES AND GOOD PRACTICE

- Public Relations Institute of Australia (2016) Diversity and Inclusion Policy to tackle gender inequality. Available at: <https://www.pria.com.au/priablog/diversity-and-inclusion-policy-to-tackle-gender-inequity>
- Global Report on the Status of Women in News Media: <https://www.iwfmf.org/our-research/global-report/>
- UNESCO Baseline definitions of key concepts and terms: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BSP/GENDER/PDF/1.%20Baseline%20Definitions%20of%20key%20gender-related%20concepts.pdf>
- UNESCO Women's and Girls' Education: <http://en.unesco.org/themes/women-s-and-girls-education/resources>
- UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002272/227222e.pdf>



- Media and gender: a scholarly agenda for the Global Alliance on Media and Gender. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/media-and-gender-a-scholarly-agenda-for-the-global-alliance-on-media-and-gender/>
- GenderLinks Gender in Media Education initiative. <http://genderlinks.org.za/what-we-do/media/coes-for-gender-in-media-education/>
- UNESCO UNITWIN University Network on Gender Media and ICTs. <http://www.unitwin.net>
- Gender-sensitive indicators for media: Framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/gender-sensitive-indicators-for-media-framework-of-indicators-to-gauge-gender-sensitivity-in-media-operations-and-content/>
- Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries (AGEMI) Resource Bank of Good Practices. [www.agemi-eu.org](http://www.agemi-eu.org)

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