



Facilitating equality through education

November 2006



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National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, Malta

National Machinery for Women's Rights, Cyprus

Coalition for Gender Equality, Latvia

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Introduction

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) was set up in January 2004 with a specific remit to promote a society where both women and men have equal opportunities and both enjoy a healthy work/life balance. This remit emanates out of the Equality for Men and Women Act (Cap 456). To achieve this, NCPE strives to ensure that gender equality becomes central to all decisions taken.

The project Facilitating Equality through Education, partly financed by the European Community Framework Strategy Programme on Gender Equality (2001 – 2005), intended to correct the gender roles and stereotypes that form part of the formal education process. It was felt necessary to tackle the education process as it should lead primary and secondary school students to aspire for work and private life roles irrespective of their gender and based on their interests and capabilities. To raise awareness on this, policymakers, teachers and students alike, were sensitised through a number of disseminated material and training.

Another aspect of the project dealt with our cultural stereotypes. Men and fathers need to equally share the family responsibilities as the majority still consider certain tasks as women's / mothers' responsibility. This was found in a study carried out in March 2006 amongst Maltese primary and secondary students. This study was financed through the project and was commissioned on behalf of NCPE.

The belief that guided this project was that there was a need for a shift in the educational process free from gender roles and stereotypes in order to produce a positive change at all levels of society. This project also believed in the effectiveness of targeting the young through a series of role plays, a computer game, a colouring book, stickers, bookmarks, leaflets and posters to show them the values of gender equality while they are in the process of forming their life aspirations and while they are choosing a career path.

Malta, Cyprus and Latvia (as a transnational partnership) joined forces throughout this project to ensure that the recommendations that emanate from this report will become part and parcel of the education policy of the three partner countries. Throughout this past year, each country analyzed the current local education policies to identify the strengths and weaknesses in relation to equality. This facilitated the concept of identifying good practices and other positive measures that may be already correcting the gaps between the two genders in the education process and mainstream them to the policies of the other partners. Furthermore it identified possible blocks that are hindering the full implementation of gender equality policies in the field of education. A series of training seminars were held, as part of this project, to current and prospective teachers on the principles of gender equality and work/life balance. Through the use of a series of practical examples, the teachers discussed gender issues that merit attention, and the need for the attentiveness to ensure that boys and girls have equal access to all educational tools. Moreover, they were sensitized to use gender neutral language in their presentations on work and family responsibilities.

In varying degrees, this project can act as a stepping stone to a series of other projects that will challenge stereotypes of male/female roles in employment and private life. In fact NCPE's way forward is to help develop a culture that allows both men and women their full and free aspiration to a career of their choice and family life.

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November 2006

1.0 Background & Overview

This paper is one of the outcomes of the project entitled Facilitating Equality Through Education (FETE), co-funded by the European Commission under the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001 – 2005). The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) choose to conduct this project with another four partners including two trans-national and two national partners. The NCPE is the lead development partner in this project. The two national partners are the Faculty of Education (University of Malta) and the Division of Education (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment). While, the trans-national partners are the National Machinery for Women's Rights in Cyprus and the Coalition for Gender Equality in Latvia.

The rationale for the project was that gender roles and stereotypes still form part of the formal education process in primary and secondary schools, and that they tend to guide students in their choices for work and in their roles in private life. The premise of the project was that gender remains the main driving force behind the preferences and future activities of students, as opposed to their interests and capabilities.

The main aim of the project, and of the research activity carried out within it, was to correct gender roles and stereotyping that formed part of the formal education process and that influenced young people in their work choices and in their role in society.

The strategy adopted by the project was to try to create a shift in the educational process, towards one that is free from gender roles and stereotypes, so as to produce a positive change at all levels of society. Equally important and strategic, the project sought to do this by achieving change at the early years of education while students are still in the process of forming life aspirations and career paths. The target population of the project were policymakers, teachers and students from the three countries, namely Malta, Cyprus and Latvia, with inputs from the international and European experience.

In what follows, an overview of the methodology employed will be provided. An in depth analysis of gender issues in education at European and International level, underlines the most significant polices and guidelines existing in this field. Best practices and outstanding projects are also brought to light, in order to reveal trends in contemporary educational policies.

The next part of the paper provides a detailed analysis of the current education policies in the partner countries, namely Malta, Latvia and Cyprus including an understanding of possible barriers hindering the full implementation of gender-equal policies in the field of education. On the basis of all the above, the paper then provides a series of recommendations which seek to respond to the objectives of the project, hence to help the promotion of a culture that allows both men and women full and free aspirations to a career and family life. In conclusion, the paper highlights the caveats of the study and provides some pointers for future research.

2.0 Methodology

Research for this paper commenced with an in-depth literature review with contributions hailing back to the forties. The review also provided an analysis of the most important policies and guidelines existing at European and International level.

A second pillar of the research involved a detailed assessment in the 3 partner countries, Malta, Cyprus and Latvia in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in relation to existing gender equality education policies. Best practices and other positive measures that may be already correcting the gaps between the two genders in education process were also pointed out. Throughout this research activity care was taken to identify options which could potentially mainstream existing good practices and positive measures.

The results of these two research activities were used as the basis for a series of discussion questions posted on FETE's e-forum, which was accessible to a total of 26 participants. These same questions were also discussed with Malta's national partners, the results of which are presented in the specific report about Malta.

Bilateral interviews and discussions were also held with Ministry Officers of each country, the results of which are presented in the detailed assessment of the three countries. The choice of holding interviews directly with Officers from the main institutions in charge of education policies was driven by the consideration that interviews represent a direct and consistent tool in social research. Moreover, the partners interviewed play a prominent role in education policies and directly and indirectly on gender issues.

The results of these parallel research activities formed the basis for the recommendations of the paper.

3.0 Literature Review

A review of the main literature pertaining to the issue in question highlights the legal and political context against which gender policies exist at a European and International level.

Equality of rights is a basic principle of the United Nations and features in the Preamble to its own Charter as one of the Organization's central goals.

"Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

The International Bill of Human Rights, consisting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols, strengthens and extends this emphasis on the human rights of women.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the entitlement of everyone to equality before the law and to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of any kind and proceeds to include sex among the grounds of such impermissible distinction (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2006)¹.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of 1966, which translate the principles of the Declaration into legally binding form, clearly state that the rights set forth are applicable to all persons without distinction of any kind and, again, put forth sex as such a ground of impermissible distinction. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life — including the right to vote and to stand for election — as well as education, health and employment. The Countries involved agreed to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms².

In the course of the past decades, a number of international organizations have also addressed the problem represented by gender discrimination, gender equality and specifically the education issue in this regard. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) claims that literally millions of people in the world are denied jobs, confined to certain occupations or offered lower pay, amongst other things, simply because of their sex and not their abilities (ILO, 2003). This practice repeats itself as individuals who face discrimination in access to a job tend to continue experiencing discrimination while in the job, in a vicious cycle of cumulative disadvantage.

It has also been argued by the ILO that within the labour market, discrimination does not result just from isolated acts of an employer or a worker, but rather that labour market processes, practices and institutions can generate and reinforce, or break the cycle of discrimination. According to the ILO, persons offering vocational guidance and counselling have an important role in these labour market processes and should ensure that they do not contribute to, or perpetuate, the vicious cycle of cumulative disadvantage. (Employment and Training Corporation, 2004)³.

1 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm>, last access 1st August 2006

2 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm>, last access 1st August 2006

3 Manual for Gender Sensitive Vocational Guidance (ETC, 2004)

According to ILO, females in most developing countries have far less access to quality education and training than do their male counterparts. This is a major economic and social development issue that begins with basic education and continues through to higher education. A firm linkage has been demonstrated between greater access of girls to educational opportunities and improvements in health, family planning, and economic development (ILO, 2000).

Interestingly, the literature reveals another potential challenge existing in many of the more economically developed countries of the OECD, and in the Caribbean: a trend towards a growing disproportion of far higher female enrolment and graduation rates at secondary levels, and even more at higher levels. Paradoxically, in the future this could create barriers to equal access for young males in the form of higher drop-out rates at secondary level and restrictions on access to higher education, even as gender segregation in secondary technical education and in higher education continues (ILO, Bureau for Gender Equality, 2000).

One contributing factor in both developing and developed countries is the persistent gender disequilibrium in the teaching profession, including technical and vocational education. The minority position of women teachers in certain regions - Africa and south Asia in particular - has been directly linked to the under-enrolment and high drop out rates of girls. The small number of women teachers and trainers to serve as role models and advisors capable of encouraging girls and women to pursue careers in technical trades, is another - and important - barrier to equality of opportunity in these fields (ILO, 2000).

Recent research by the ILO suggests that the highly feminised nature of the teaching profession in some countries may have a negative impact on improvements in salaries and other conditions of service which contribute to a higher professional status, recruitment and maintenance of high quality graduates in teaching, and ultimately, quality education for both males and females (ILO, Bureau for Gender Equality, 2000).

Continued prosperity and a dynamic labour market in many OECD countries continues to attract many highly qualified men and women to career choices other than teaching, leading to shortages - in both numbers and quality. These are likely to be aggravated as a 'graying' teaching profession faces large-scale departures of professionals from the present generation (ILO, 2000).

Another of the major issues worldwide, particularly for developing countries is access to education. In 1990, delegates from 155 countries, as well as representatives from some 150 organizations agreed at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (5-9 March 1990) to universalise primary education and massively reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade (UNESCO, 2006). It was noted that if children are excluded from access to education, they are denied their human rights and prevented from developing their talents and interests in the most basic of ways.

The majority of children who fail to gain access to schooling or who leave prematurely (even before the skills of literacy and numeracy have been properly gained) are girls. Illiteracy still affects more than 860 million adults, almost two-thirds of whom are women. Eliminating gender disparities by 2005 was one of the Millennium Development Goals and the total number of school-age children missing school is projected to fall below 100 million for the first time since data has been recorded. Unfortunately however, the organizations of the United Nations recognized that, notwithstanding that the road to gender equality in education has had its successes, the journey is far from over⁴.

On a global basis, the face of poverty is overwhelmingly female. An estimated 70% of people who live in extreme poverty (those with less than US\$1 (0.794115 euros) per day) are women and girls. Women own less than one-hundredth of the world's land and property; girls account for two thirds of children without primary education; and only nine countries met the UN target to have 30% female senior decision-makers in place by 1995, (Stocking, 2002:1).

The OXFAM⁵ has recently undertaken an interesting study which shows that the majority of countries are legally committed to achieving gender equality and universal access to education. This commitment is expressed through the ratification of international conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This Convention recognizes that children are entitled to human rights in their own right, and that a child's best interests may differ from the wishes or best interests of his or her parents or other legal guardians. The rights under this Convention which are particularly relevant to reproductive and sexual health include in Article 2(1) B, among others, the right to non-discrimination on the ground of sex.

Indeed, it is also reflected in domestic legislation that guarantees free and compulsory education, and that binds a government to meeting national targets for achieving parity of opportunity for girls and boys. Legislation against the abuse of girls is a measure of legal commitment to achieving gender parity in schools: psychological abuse, corporal punishment, sexual harassment, and rape all severely limit the enrolment and retention of female teachers and students in school.

Literature commissioned by the UK government and addressing the issue of gender in education recognises the crucial role of this subject for society and its future. The importance that both boys and girls have the opportunity to use their potential, based on their talents and interests rather than their gender has been highlighted. A 2003 study suggests that girls should be offered the same opportunities as boys and should be able to pursue whatever career most interests them – be it is science, engineering or IT. Boys too should be offered the same opportunities as girls whether it is social work, nursing or hairdressing (Department Trade and Industry, 2003)⁶. Both should be given the chance to set up their own business. It is suggested that if girls and boys are not offered the same opportunities, this constitutes discrimination by treating people differently simply because of their sex and not their abilities.

4 UNICEF, 2005

5 The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief met for the first time in 1942. The Committee gradually became known by its abbreviated telegraph address, Oxfam (This name was formally adopted in 1965)

6 Publication produced by the Department of Trade and Industry together with the Women and Equality Unit and the Department of Education and skills of the United Kingdom

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) in Malta recognizes that gender-based discrimination results in and reinforces inequalities and this leads to the waste of human talent and resources – a fact which has a detrimental effect on productivity, competitiveness the economy and not least, the well-being of the person. The elimination of discrimination and inequalities is essential if all individuals irrespective of their sex are to be able to choose freely the direction of their professional paths and working lives and to develop fully their talents and capabilities and to be rewarded according to merit (Employment and Training Corporation, 2004)⁷.

In his publication for UNESCO on Policies and Guidelines for Educational and Vocational Guidance, Stuart Conger (2002) sums up the following recommendations for Counsellors and Educators:

1. Provide gender-fair career development programmes whilst examining and checking their own attitudes and preconceived ideas.
2. Encourage risk-taking;
3. Encourage non-traditional choices;
4. Assure accurate information;
5. Develop a sense of agency so that students believe that they can have more control over their lives;
6. Recognise that the use of male terms as gender-neutral reflects bias against women and thus counsellors must use inclusive and gender-fair language in all oral and written communication;
7. Continue throughout their professional careers to gain knowledge and awareness of the social, biological and psychological influences on female and male development in general and their career development in particular.

Brannon (1999) claims that feminist scholars have disputed the biological basis of behavioural differences between women and men, proposing that it is social experiences that produce differences in behaviour. Historical and cross-cultural studies show that both females and males are capable of participating in manual and knowledge work, as well as in caring. In the past physical strength made a great deal of difference for a variety of activities especially in the world of paid employment. Today, few positions require physical strength - although the legacy of this position persists. Gender is a very poor predictor of mental abilities and in both verbal and mathematical abilities, very small gender differences exist. Brannon claims that:

"Despite the widespread belief that men have superior mathematical and women superior verbal abilities, the technique of meta-analysis has revealed that gender differences are small". (Brannon, 1999)

Gender Equality plays a very important role at European Union level. Articles 2 and 3 of the EC Treaty deal directly with gender mainstreaming whilst, Article 141 speaks of equality between women and men in matter of employment and occupation. Article 13 addresses sexual discrimination within and outside the work place.

On the legal basis provided by this treaty, several EU instruments in the areas of employment, social security and goods and services echo the principles of gender-equality. These include, among others, the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions (Directive 2002/73/EC); of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security (Council Directive 79/7/EEC); Council Directive 97/80/EC of 15 December 1997 on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex (97/80/EC).

⁷ Manual for Gender Sensitive Vocational Guidance (ETC, 2004)

The integration of gender equality into all community policies is the principle at the basis of Gender mainstreaming. The community framework on gender equality has the purpose to establish a framework for action within which all Community activities can contribute to attain the goal of eliminating inequalities and promoting equality between women and men, as set out in Article 3(2) of the Treaty. It indeed provides an integrated approach encompassing legislation mainstreaming and positive actions. This strategy is supported by an action programme that also provides financial support. In addition, an annual report on equality between women and men is submitted to the Spring European Council – the most recent (February 2006) highlighted that “substantial gaps persist between women and men: women’s employment is concentrated in a limited number of sectors and professions, the gaps in employment and pay remain at unacceptably high levels, women’s access to political and economic decision-making positions remains insufficient”.

3.1 Best Practices

In the context of promoting gender equality as a guiding principle, a number of actions promoted by the European Union (EU) as well as individual initiatives by many member states can be taken as good examples for best practices.

In 2004 Member states agreed on a benchmark for education and training systems. The aim was to increase participation in maths, science and technology (MST) studies, including the improvement in the gender balance of such participation. The Council Resolution (2004) called on Member States to ensure integration of a gender perspective in all policies and practices relating to guidance provision. The main objectives of this resolution can be summarised as follow:

1. A gender perspective integrated in all policies and practices relating to guidance provision;
2. Develop European cooperation in lifelong guidance using EU policy frameworks for education, training, employment, gender, social inclusion, mobility and services of general interest;
3. Improved gender balance in participation rates in maths, science and technology.

These EU initiatives show how the issues represented by gender imbalances in education are of a concern at EU and National levels. These initiatives are also of a great importance in respect of actions and policies developed and have a direct impact in influencing behaviours and correct gender stereotypes.

Many countries are addressing the problem of gender imbalance, not by specific measures aimed at MST but through general policies designed to address equal opportunities. This is the case in Estonia, Luxemburg, Malta, Spain and Sweden. In Spain there is some research aimed at gender equality in general along with specific teacher training courses aimed at equality (but not specifically directed towards MST). In Luxemburg, all didactical materials in primary schools have been reviewed in an attempt to remove gender stereotypes. In Sweden measures more specifically related to MST have been adopted at secondary school level in the reform of upper secondary education, introducing more free choice in the “hard” natural science programme and a technical programme designed to appeal to girls.

In addition, Sweden has set up a delegation specifically to investigate why girls avoid maths and to come up with ideas on how to address this.

Other countries where gender imbalance is recognised, and to some extent addressed, include Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and the UK.

Again measures vary widely in both range and scope. Initiatives in France have been taken at regional level and comprise conferences and meetings with various associations, but the relay of information to schools is perceived to be poor. In the Netherlands, initiatives take the form of out of school activities aimed at getting girls involved in technical projects. In Austria, projects have been developed to encourage technological studies by organising workshops at schools and information days at universities. In Germany, initiatives by universities or associations include an annual girls' day at university and the Ada Lovelace mentoring scheme for girls. In the Flemish Community, the technology networks (ISCED 1 and 2) is given special attention to subject matters which are interesting for boys and girls. The Department of Science, Innovation and Media mentions in its annual appeal for science projects (ISCED 1 and 2 and 3) that projects which undertake special actions for girls, are favoured above others having the same score.

On a larger scale, Norway has attempted to address the problem through providing a special quota for female students in Computer Technology at the University of Science and Technology. The concept of mentoring is also addressed in a National project supported by the Ministry of Education and Research to target maths, which is regarded as a base for other MST subjects. This longitudinal project is designed to allow girls to experience maths as a subject which is fun, relevant and a challenge. Women with jobs related to MST are used as mentors and role models and women from industry cooperate with teachers by taking part in school MST projects. The UK Government provides support for a project set up to examine classroom practice in Physics and to consider how this can affect the interest of females. The concept of mentoring is again evident in a similar government supported project designed to examine the effectiveness of role models in engaging females in MST⁸.

On the front of practical projects developed at a national level the example of Germany can be highlighted. Projects developed are similar in content and methodology to many other projects carried out by other member states.

The Federal Government of Germany has adopted the goal of implementing the strategy of gender mainstreaming. LizzyNet is a platform conceived in 2000, for making IT and new media more attractive for girls and young women. The main consideration behind this initiative is that women are still largely underrepresented in IT and technical careers: Often their approach to technology is different from that of their male peers. The guiding principle of this project is to involve girls in the creation of the Internet world. To achieve this goal LizzyNet combines opportunities for qualification as well as incentives to participate actively in net activities. Today there are almost 55,000 registered Lizzys. Online courses and learning materials offered by LizzyNet can be used for self study, but also can be integrated in classroom teaching or in free working groups in all educational institutions. An evaluation of LizzyNet in 2003 conducted by a team of independent researchers gave interesting insights on what attracts girls to the Internet, which activities they prefer and which social groups were involved with LizzyNet⁹.

8 <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/mathnational2004.pdf>
9 <http://www.lizzynet.de>

LeaNet is another project experienced in Germany, a portal and a community especially developed for women teachers and women student teachers from all types of schools and from all subjects. Surveys showed that female teachers feel less motivated and sometimes less secure using new media than their male colleagues. As they represented 60 per cent of German teachers, it was considered of the utmost importance that women teachers are prepared for the use of new media in the classroom. The public access area offers information on schools and education, new media and gender issues for anyone interested in these subjects. A daily news ticker, a monthly newsletter and a range of subject-specific columns cover a broad spectrum: reports from conferences and trade fairs, presentation of new literature and media services, use of new media in the classroom and aspects of everyday teaching¹⁰.

¹⁰ <http://www.leanet.de/68>

4.0 Policy and Practice in Malta, Cyprus and Latvia

Education policies and best practices in Malta, Cyprus and Latvia will here be investigated. In depth analysis of the different countries' education systems, also supported by statistics, are presented with the intention to bring to light gender biased behaviours and gender imbalances, particularly in education, within the three countries.

Given the fact that each country presents specific characteristics and also carries particular issues, the reports that follow were written by the national gender analysts involved in the FETE project. Although some editing work was conducted, the following reports represent research mainly work as conducted and submitted by the three organisations that took part in the project.

4.1 Malta

4.1.1 Introduction

Human resources are known to be Malta's main natural resource. According to the Operational Programme 2: Cohesion Policy 2007-2013, the Government's priority is that of encouraging and supporting people to realize their full potential in order to contribute to Malta's socio-economic development.

According to the National Statistics Office (NSO, 2004)¹¹ the student population has decreased at primary level mainly due to a decline in the national birth rate. However, on the other hand the student population has increased at secondary level and at post-secondary level. This increase in vocational education is also due to the opening of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). Statistics published by the NSO in 2004 also show that the number of university graduates during the academic year 2003/2004 increased by 4.1 per cent over the previous year, reaching the total number of 2,145 graduates. Of these 57.1 per cent were females.

According to the EU Commission Report on equality between women and men, 2005, (February, 2005) in the EU25 the educational attainment for (at least upper secondary school) for men and women aged between 20-24 is 79% for men while that of women is 74%. The situation in Malta is slightly different, since women present higher educational attainment than men. In fact statistics show¹² that in Malta the educational attainment for men is 46%, while that for women is 48%. However, although women are more likely to further their studies, a closer look at the Maltese education system shows that gender are not equally represented in the various faculties and institutes making up the post-secondary, vocational and tertiary education. For instance, women are still holding on to the traditional 'caring' fields. One possible reason for this is that women's choices are often based on a realistic appraisal of their chances for employment. Moreover, women's choices are also influenced by one's chances of combining work and family life. Family and home responsibilities are still sometimes perceived as women's tasks. Moreover, according to the educational statistics published by the NSO (2003/2004), at tertiary level, women are overall still predominantly present in teaching (73.7%), health and welfare courses (63.7%). On the other hand, they are significantly under represented in engineering (27.7%) and the sciences (30.0%), thus restricting their potential participation in economic activity in these areas later in life.

¹¹ NSO 'Education and Culture' (2004),

¹² Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS, 2004)

The aim of this section of the report, likewise the main objectives of the FETE project, is to address the need to change behaviour, attitudes, norms and values which define and influence gender roles in society through education. Education is an influential agent through which awareness about gender equality can be raised. In addition gender discrimination can be overcome through the development and implementation of educational policies. In fact, various policy documents have been published by the Ministry of Education in Malta. For the purpose of this report the below mentioned documents will be considered. These include:

- National Minimum Curriculum: 'Creating the Future together' (2000)
- Curriculum Implementation: 'Strategic Plan' (2001)
- Proceedings: 'National Minimum Curriculum on its way' (2001)
- Report on Gender Equality Plan 2003-2004
- Report on Gender Equality Plan 2005-2007
- Creating Inclusive Schools: Guidelines for the Implementation of the National Curriculum Policy on Inclusive Education (2005)

4.1.2 Policies: National structures for the implementation of the legal framework

'In a democratic society, every individual should be respected. Therefore, the educational community should actively oppose all forms of discrimination by promoting the corresponding attitudes and readiness to act' .

(NMC: Creating the Future Together, p.25)

Constitution and the Education Act

Policies in the field of education and training are important tools for gender equality. The Constitution and the Education Act (Cap 327), 1988, provide the legal framework underpinning the provision of education in Malta.

The prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex with regard to access to all types of vocational guidance, vocational training, and re-training is tackled in the Education Act (1988). This prohibition is applicable to all educational establishments or any other entity providing vocational training or guidance and covers:

1. the access to any course, vocational training or guidance;
2. the award of educational support for students or trainees;
3. the selection and implementation of the curricula; and
4. the assessment of the skills or knowledge of the students or trainees.

'Educational establishments and entities providing vocational training are to ensure, within the limits of their competence, that curricula and textbooks do not propagate discrimination as well as are to fulfil their obligation to suppress sexual harassment (as provided under sub article (2) of article 9)'.

(Source: www.msp.gov.mt/services/subpages/content.asp?id=1595)

National Minimum Curriculum

The legal basis for the Maltese National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) can be found in the Education Act (Cap. 327). The National Minimum Curriculum: Creating the Future Together (1999) is applicable to all State, Church and Independent schools alike. This document constitutes a binding foundation for the development of separate curricula, at three different levels of education including the pre-primary, primary and secondary educational system. The NMC that applies to all education providers in Malta as regards the teaching of persons of compulsory school attendance age (5-16 year olds) is based on the belief of social justice. Inclusion is an NMC commitment that concerns the education of all students. In fact, one of the policies of the NMC is to make learning accessible to all:

"The education community must ensure equality access to the educational system without discrimination on the grounds of ability, gender, religion, race or socio-cultural and economic background".

(NMC: Creating the Future Together, p.25)

The NMC curriculum strengthens the educational community's commitment of guaranteeing equal opportunities for everyone, irrespective of gender. In fact one of the principles of the NMC is gender equality.

- Principle 11: Gender Equality (NMC: Creating the Future Together, p.25)

Because of its commitment to the principle of gender equality, the Curriculum assigns to the educational community the following responsibilities, that boys and girls:

1. Follow the same curriculum;
2. Are catered for in a manner that ensures equal access to the same work opportunities;
3. Are exposed to the same educational experiences;
4. Have the opportunity to effectively choose the subjects they want to learn based on an informed choice.

According, to the NMC:

"Gender equality is not a theme that should be treated by the school in isolation, or during the teaching of a particular subject. Equality should be an interdisciplinary theme which teachers can develop within the context of their particular subject, confronting prejudice and promoting more gender inclusive alternatives"

(NMC: Creating the Future Together, p.31)

Therefore, schools should ensure that the resources made available by the educational community should actively explore and create texts and visual representations that promote the principle of equality. In addition, according to the NMC, structural change should be complemented by ongoing renewal of the teachers' pedagogy. In co-educational schools, teachers should tackle such pedagogical and organizational themes including:

1. gender interaction during group activities;
2. the amount of attention devoted to people of different gender;
3. expectations regarding people of different gender; and
4. responsibilities assigned to people of different gender.

Moreover, amongst other objectives, one of the main objectives of the NMC is Objective 5: Strengthening of Gender Equality (NMC: Creating the Future Together, p.54). According to this objective, on completion of one's education in a Maltese school, one should consider man and woman as being equal. Therefore students need to have:

- Knowledge and information about laws regarding gender equality;
- Skills including appreciation and acceptance of gender difference; and also to be able to criticize discriminatory attitudes and situations; and
- Attitudes including the belief in social justice that includes the fundamental principle of equality between women and men.

Implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC)

The document of the NMC reaches its maximum effectiveness when it is implemented in schools. Policies of gender, differentiated learning, inclusion, and educating for democratic citizenship set out in the NMC need to permeate the curricula of both primary and secondary schools.

The Strategic Plan (2001) which was developed by the National Steering Committee is an instrument for the implementation process of the Curriculum at school and central levels. This plan represents minimal requirements that are being made legally obligatory on all state and non-state schools in the interests of implementing the NMC. According to the Strategic Plan (2001) gender in the NMC (G-16) includes:

A. Policies

1. Preparing legislation to ensure gender equity.
2. Ensuring that the deployment of administrative and teaching staff is gender sensitive.
3. Requiring schools to have in-house gender equity policy.
4. Having a written policy statement on equal gender opportunities.
5. Setting up guidelines for elimination of gender stereotyping.
6. Establishing framework to ensure that gender equity permeates all new NMC programmes

B. Structures include the establishment of

1. A post of gender equity officer.
2. An education committee in gender equity.
3. A monitoring committee.

C. Process

1. To organize in-service training on gender.
2. To develop a joint programme with differentiated learning.
3. To organize an awareness programme for School Council members.

4.1.3 Ministry of Education in relation to gender equality

General Overview

The Minister of Education has the overall responsibility for education in Malta while the Education Division is responsible for leading, coordinating, monitoring and providing the educational services within the state sector. The Division also has the responsibility for monitoring and regulating educational services within the non-state sector.

Facts and figures: Equality in Decision Making

A. Ministry of Education

Table 1: Ministry of Education in Malta

Role	Number of Males	Number of Females
Minister of Education	1	0
Permanent secretary	1	0

(Source: www.education.gov.mt accessed on August, 2006)

B. Female Academics in decision making positions

Female and male teachers occupy different positions in the educational sector. Research¹³ shows that only a few women occupy professorship and high positions in educational field. This is also the case in the Maltese education system. The educational sector also shows signs of gender segregation with a much larger number of female teachers but a larger proportion of male Heads of Schools. Moreover, at University only 30 out of 267 senior staff were females (Talbot and Valletta, July 2003).

In the academic year 2002-2003 females made up just 11.72% of the total number of Academic staff on the University's main governing bodies, namely the Council, the Senate and the Faculty Boards. The highest number of females were present in the Education and the Faculty Boards (43.75%), whereas there was no female member on the Economics, Management and Accountancy Faculty Board. (Talbot and Valletta, July 2003).

13 Hollier, 2004

C. Tertiary education Academics on a Full-time basis

According to the Commission Report COM (February, 2005) in Malta only 1% of full professors or equivalent (Grade A) are females as compared to 14% female professors in the EU25. Moreover, research¹⁴ shows that during October 2002, 5 females compared to 96 males, occupied full-time posts of professor and associate professor. Two of these were found in the Faculty of Medicine, one in the Institute of Health Care, one in the faculty of Art and the other in the Institute of Linguistics. In addition, during the academic year 2002-2003, full time female academic presence was felt mainly in the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery (19.1%), the Faculty of Education (44.1%) and the Institute of Health Care (55.3%). Moreover, during this same academic year, the only full-time academic within the Institute for Masonry and Construction Research was a female assistant lecturer (ETC, 2004)¹⁵.

Furthermore during the academic year 2002-2003, there was no full-time female presence in the Institute of Agriculture, the European Documentation and Research Centre, the Institute for Energy Technology and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies¹⁶.

Table 2: Heads of Schools

<i>Government Schools</i>	Males	Females
Primary	40	30
Secondary	21	10
<i>Religious, Lay and Independent Schools</i>		
Primary and Secondary	27	33
Total	88	73

(Source: Borg (2003) Personal Communication.)

Gender Differences in Head Teacher Leadership and Management Styles

In their study 'Gender Differences in Head teacher Leadership and Management Styles: A Study of a Number of Head teachers in Maltese Secondary Schools'¹⁷ investigated whether there actually is gender stereotyping in leadership and management styles, or whether there is cross-gender homogeneity, or even evidence of androgyny in leadership and management styles within a number of local educational settings. The research consisted of structured interviews with eight head teachers, four female and four male, in state, church and independent secondary schools in Malta. A self-report questionnaire was also administered to the eight head teachers on the subject of leadership and management styles. The results showed that apart from a few exceptions, there was broad cross-gender homogeneity between the head teachers. There also emerged an ideal 'head teacher leadership style' with equal numbers of female and male characteristics. The findings have important implications both for the practice of educational leadership and management in contemporary schools.

¹⁴ Talbot and Valletta, July 2003

¹⁵ Manual for Gender Sensitive Vocational Guidance (ETC, 2004)

¹⁶ Talbot and Valletta, July 2003

¹⁷ Pace, 2005

Table 3: Teachers in Schools

	Males	Females
Teachers in Government Schools	2627	3720
Teachers in private schools	528	1623
Total	315	5343

(Source: NSO – Education Statistics 2001/2002. Children and Society)

Feminization of the teaching profession

A large number of females are choosing teaching as their career. Educational Statistics (NSO, 2004) show that 66.1% of the teaching staff in both the public and private sectors was females. Moreover out of the 5,926 female teachers, 609 were part-timers. An attraction of the teaching profession is that employment hours fit neatly with children's school time. Since, women are still sometimes perceived as having the main responsibility for child rearing and care, employment hours have a weight for them when making career choice. Being a teacher not only makes it easier for females to be able to have time for domestic and family responsibilities, but they also do not have to rely on external childcare facilities, which unfortunately are still limited.

The large amount of females in the teaching profession is also leading to the feminization of the teaching profession. However, positive trends can also be observed within the teaching profession. For instance, in boys' Junior Lyceum and Secondary Schools, the number of female teachers is on the increase. Until a few years ago, only male teachers were allowed to teach these schools. Even at Sixth Form level, the number of female lecturers is also on the increase. Nevertheless, according to Debono & Caruana (2003) subjects taught by males and female teachers are different. While men teach sciences, women are more likely to teach PSD, religion, and counselling. However, this fact is also changing.

One of the major concerns related to the feminization of the teaching profession is the lack of male role models for children attending primary and kindergarten schools. Males are underrepresented in primary schools and absent in kindergarten schools. The absence of males is of a concern especially in cases where children do not have a male role model at home. Thus, these children are missing out on the relationships with healthy male role models. In fact a campaign to encourage more males to take teaching as a profession is in the side-line.

Guidance and Counselling Services

Guidance is an important and central part of education. Career guidance provision within the education system, plays an essential role in creating the possibility for a person to identify capacities, competences and interests that will lead to making appropriate educational, training and occupational decisions. Effective guidance is conducive to more effective learning and higher educational attainment, and it furthers the personal development of students. The provision of guidance services is concerned with furthering all aspects of the personal development of students (including intellectual, social and vocational development). It is important that guidance services offered in schools are

responsive to changes in education, the community and society in general. Guidance programmes are person-centred and are, therefore, primarily concerned with empowering students to take responsibility for themselves, their own development and learning rather than imposing one's particular standpoints, values and decisions.

An important policy instrument that directs guidance or information services in the education sector is the National Minimum Curriculum. This document provides clear directives regarding the school-to-work curriculum and encourages gender-equal guidance and equity in opportunities and outcomes. Moreover, the Guidance Services Manual published by the Education Division in 2000, also provides guidance teachers with a framework regarding their role, competencies and quality standards.

In Malta, the Education Division has a team of Guidance Teachers and Counsellors who offer support and guidance to students to help them achieve their full potential. All students have an equal right of access to guidance programmes regardless of their age, sex, ability, race and beliefs. The Guidance and Counselling Unit, co-ordinates various activities and projects at a national level, including:

- Careers Seminars (for school leavers);
- Careers Orientation Visits (ongoing basis);
- Tracer Study (Annual);
- Parenting Skills Programme (ongoing throughout the scholastic year);
- Talks to parents and discussions on guidance related topics;
- Participation on School Development Days regarding Guidance related topics;
- In-service courses for teachers (inset training).

Careers education and guidance

Careers education and guidance is an essential part of the guidance services offered in schools. It is the responsibility of the guidance team, together with the school counsellor, to help and support students to make choices related to their career.

When students need to make choices related to choice of subjects, post-secondary courses and training or careers, they usually consult with guidance teachers and/or subject teachers guidance services include specific consultation for:

1. choice of subjects;
2. choice of post-secondary courses; and
3. the proceeding to tertiary education.

Students need to make well-informed, realistic career/vocational decisions, based on the knowledge of themselves and of the opportunities available. Through the careers education programme, guidance teachers help students develop, in the following areas including, self-awareness, decision making skills, awareness of present/future opportunities, and preparation for life after leaving school and awareness of information resources within and outside school.

Manual for Gender Sensitive Vocational Guidance

The 'Manual for Gender Sensitive Vocational Guidance' (ETC, 2004) gives an overview of the impact of gender on one's development, and on how gender tends to shape the individual's expectations of oneself and of others throughout life in the family, at school and at work. According to this manual guidance teachers need to:

- Avoid and challenge all types of gender stereotyping of careers, and to ensure equality of opportunity regardless of gender;
- Evaluate all activities and materials available and ensure that careers education is non-discriminatory, in terms of gender, special needs, social class, race or beliefs;
- Research and to frequently update careers information for an effective careers education of guidance programmes;
- Cooperate and coordinate with parents and other staff, including senior management, Personal and Social Development (PSD) teachers, form teachers and others.

Gender issues are still shaping the vocational development of both sexes. Ultimately, this is limiting the career choices and thus development of the individuals. For instance, although the University of Malta is registering an increasing number of female students, however, this is not the case in the vocational sector. For instance, at MCAST although a positive trend is noted, the female to male ratio is 1:2 (MCAST, 2005) and in the apprenticeship schemes there is a ratio of 1:5 (ETC, 2003) respectively. On the other hand, no males opted for beauty therapy course. This shows that the gender differences within various courses need to be addressed.

Training of Teachers

Training for Guidance Teachers

Guidance Teachers within the public and private schools were given training by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) with the scope of updating them on the legal developments in the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (2002) and The Equality for Men and Women and Women Act (2003). During the training sessions which were held in April 2004, the guidance teachers were briefed about these laws and their relevance to the labour market. Moreover, during the workshops issues relating to the interviewing process, job advertisements and sexual harassment were addressed.

Training for Personal and Social Development Teachers and Guidance Teachers

Four training sessions were organized between March and April 2004 by the ETC to all guidance and personal and social development teachers in public, private and church schools. The training included four workshops on career opportunities to both genders, how to avoid gender stereotyping and work segregation and the importance of the role of males in sharing domestic and family responsibilities at home.

In-service training for teachers

Compulsory in-service courses for teachers are organised by the Education Division during July and September. The in-service courses for teachers that were organised during July and September 2006 tackled gender issues including:

- a. Gender Issues in the Maltese Environment;
- b. The role of women on literature;
- c. Dealing with gender issues;
- d. How to write scripts with gender issues in mind.

The organisation of in-service training for teachers tackling gender issues is a good practice. However it is necessary that gender issues are mainstreamed across other subject areas such as science.

N.B. This course is organised by Dr. M. Darmanin, University of Malta.

University of Malta: Faculty of Education

Various courses in relation to gender equality are also organised at the University of Malta. These include:

1. Science Education which includes a section on 'Gender and science learning'
2. Gender Equity in the Primary School. During this course students have the opportunity to consider the primary school's pedagogy outcomes for girls and boys, and whether a gender equity policy would reduce or eliminate the negative outcomes for children¹⁸

In addition, amongst other credits, 'Education & Equity issues' is one of the topics that is included in the Bachelors of Education (B. Ed) course at the University of Malta.

Therefore, one could argue that the Manual for Gender Sensitive Vocational Guidance and also the teachers training are important tools for the professional development of teachers in relation to gender equality.

4.1.4 Statistical Analysis

The labour force survey (NSO, 2005) reveals that 53.7 % of the labour force hold secondary level qualifications, 19.7 % hold only primary education qualifications and 8.2 % of the total labour force was in possession of a first degree or post-graduate qualifications.

Pre-primary Education

In Malta the State provides pre-primary education to three year old children. Attendance to pre-primary is voluntary, however a large percentage of the age cohort (under 3 years) attend.

18 This course is organised by Dr. M. Darmanin, University of Malta.

Primary and Secondary Education

In Malta, primary and secondary education in state schools is free of charge, including textbooks. Education is also free but with donation in church schools and non-taxable in independent schools. Both church and independent schools provide education from pre-primary to secondary levels but local tertiary level is not offered.

In the case of state schools, pupils sit for an exam at the end of six years of primary education. Those who pass are admitted into Junior Lyceums while the rest attend secondary schools. In the case of church and independent schools, pupils usually move to secondary education after successfully completing the annual exam of the last year of the primary education.

Facts and Figures: Student's Career Choice

Various local studies have explored students' choice of subjects. Amongst others, these studies include unpublished thesis that include topics such as the exploration of Home Economics and choice of careers (Spiteri, 1997); and the examination of the perceptions of Maltese adolescents and adults regarding Home Economics and its related careers (Casha, 2000). Furthermore, a local study, Sultana (1992, 1995) has examined the general perceptions and stereotypes that exist towards local vocational schools. The results of these two separate studies (Sultana 1992, 1995) have shown that perceptions of gender, low-ability and low-status stereotypes exist towards local vocational schools. However, despite these stereotypes and perceptions, students still take up Home Economics and aspire towards hotel and catering careers.

Moreover, another local study, Darmanin M. (1991, 1997) has examined various factors affecting subject and career choices. The aims of this study were to investigate the link between Home Economics and hotel and catering careers together with perceptions of the subject and these careers. The study, also examined factors influencing subject and career choices pertaining to the hotel and catering sector. A questionnaire focusing on knowledge of, and attitudes towards, the subject and related careers together with students' educational and economic background was distributed to a sample of students attending the local catering school. Interviews regarding Home Economics relevance to the Hotel and Catering labour market, perceptions of such careers and career goals were conducted with a sample of students following the hotel and catering courses and professionals in this industry. From this study, it emerged that stereotypes resulted mostly due to lack of knowledge awareness. Moreover, this study shows that although the gender stereotype is decreasing, it still exists in the working environment.

Furthermore, since October 1990 the Guidance and Counselling Services have been organising a series of tracer studies both at school and at the national level. Results of the previous tracer studies from 1990 up to 1995 showed that more male than female students opted to continue their education. However, this trend was reversed in 1997 more female (1,560) than male (1,168) students opted to enrol in post-secondary courses. According to the 2004 tracer study¹⁹ more female (72%) than male (67%) students are opting to continue their education after Form 5. This report also shows that 91% of girls in Junior Lyceums opted for post-secondary education, while 83% of boys in Junior Lyceums continued their education. On the other hand, in secondary schools the number of female (32%) students that are furthering their studies is almost equal to that of male (30%) students.

19 <http://schoolnet.gov.mt/guidance/Docs/Tracer%20study2004.pdf>

A Tracer study is conducted by the Guidance & Counselling Services. The aim of this study is to provide information to educational planners and the staff working at the Guidance and Counselling Services.

For the purpose of this tracer study the students' educational options have been divided into three different options:

1. *Academic options* include Junior College, the Institute of Business & Commerce, Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary, the Institute of Information & Communication, M.A.Refalo Complex, and Private Sixth Forms;
2. *Technical options* include electronics engineering, mechanical engineering, agribusiness, maritime studies, building & construction, MCAST Gozo;
3. *Vocational options* include community services, art & design, tourism studies and health care.

Table 4: Students' Educational Options

	<i>Academic</i>			<i>Technical</i>			<i>Vocational</i>		
	Males	Females	Ratio (M : F)	Males	Females	Ratio (M : F)	Males	Females	Ratio (M : F)
Junior Lyceums	378	894	0.4 : 1	156	23	6.8 : 1	39	58	0.7 : 1
Secondary Schools	63	154	0.4 : 1	174	23	7.6 : 1	36	27	1.3 : 1
Private Schools	753	567	1.3 : 1	60	1	60 : 1	14	39	0.4 : 1
Total	1,194	1,615	0.7 : 1	390	47	8.3 : 1	89	124	0.7 : 1

(Source: Guidance and Counselling Services (2004). Tracer Study)

According to the tracer study (2004) the majority of the students (81%) that opt for Post Secondary Courses are more likely to choose from the academic options. Therefore students are more likely to enrolling in courses at the Junior College, the Institute of Business & Commerce, Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary, the Institute of Information & Communication, M.A.Refalo Complex Gozo, and Private Sixth Forms. On the other hand, only 13% of the students opted to choose technical courses, while 6 % chose vocational courses.

Moreover, when comparing student's educational options according to gender, the tracer study (2004) shows that females outnumber males in academic and vocational options, while, males outnumber females in technical options.

Post-secondary Education

The number of young people enrolling in post-secondary education has been increasing. Post-secondary education is offered free of charge in state schools to all students who successfully complete secondary education. Post secondary Education is offered by various institutions/colleges including amongst others the:

1. Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS)
2. Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)
3. Institute for Health Care (IHC)
4. M.A.Refalo Complex Gozo
5. Private Sixth Forms
6. St. Thomas Institute
7. Junior College
8. Higher Secondary

Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)

During the academic year of 2003 a total of 1420 students of which 819 were males and 401 were females enrolled at MCAST. Statistics show that males predominated in courses related to Electronics, Telecommunications, Computer hardware, Masonry, Engineering, Tile laying and Plastering, Heritage skills, Business, Draughtsman ship, Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning., Computing, Navigating, Arts and Crafts.

While females predominated in courses regarding Arts and Design, Matriculation certificate, Banking & Financial services, Administrative & Secretarial Studies, Retailing, and Insurance.

Table 5: MCAST Population Statistics (October, 2005)

Institutes		Male	Female	Total	Ratio (M : F)
Agribusiness	■	47	17	64	2.8 : 1
Art & Design	□	134	157	291	0.85 : 1
Building & Construction	■	453	37	490	12.2 : 1
Business & Commerce	■	277	512	789	0.54 : 1
Community Services	■	63	345	408	0.18 : 1
Electrical & Electronics Engineering	■	474	20	494	23.7 : 1
Gozo	□	100	91	191	1.1 : 1
ICT	■	433	102	535	4.24 : 1
Maritime	■	25	5	30	5 : 1
Mechanical Engineering	■	410	14	424	29.3 : 1
Totals	■	2416	1300	3716	1.86 : 1

■ male dominated ■ similar □ female dominated

(Source: MCAST population statistics (October, 2005))

The above MCAST statistics show that male students exceed female students within most of the institutes. This table also shows that the majority of women opt for courses in relation to Business & Commerce and Community Services. On the other hand, male students exceed female student in various institutes including Agribusiness, Building & Construction, ICT, Maritime and Mechanical Engineering.

Institute of Tourism Studies (I.T.S.)

Referring to data from the tracer study of past I.T.S. students (October, 2000) research (Farrugia, 2005) shows male students (60%) outnumber female students (40%). Moreover, this research shows that overall 16% of I.T.S. graduates are currently working in a decision-making post. Of these 93 are males, while 34 are females. Various reasons can be attributed to women's lack in decision-making positions within the Hotel industry including amongst others family responsibilities and glass ceiling. Another reason that justifies the low percentage of females who presently occupy a decision-making position within the Hotel Industry is that according to the I.T.S. tracer study (2000) male outnumbered female students. Moreover, according to the tracer study (2004) published by the Guidance and Counseling Services more male students joined I.T.S. courses than females students.

Table 6: Full-time students attending the Institute of Tourism Studies (31st March, 2004)

Course	Males	Females	Ratio (M : F)	Total
Higher Diploma in Hospitality Management	32	30	1.1 : 1	62
Hotel Operations	27	26	1.03 :	1 53
Accommodation Operations	17	43	0.4 : 1	60
Food preparation & Service (Foundation)	50	13	3.8 : 1	63
Food preparation & Production & Supervisory Studies	63	20	3.1 : 1	83
Food & Beverage service & Supervisory Studies	3	3	1 : 1	6
Food Preparation & Service Level 11	19	6	3.1 : 1	25
Food Preparation & Production (Diploma)	27	1	27 : 1	28
Food & Beverage Service (Diploma)	10	3	3.3 : 1	13
Hotel Services (Foundation)	-	1	-	1
Travel Agency Operations	2	8	0.25 : 1	10
Tour Guiding	2	12	0.2 : 1	14
Sports Leisure & Recreation	5	5	1 : 1	10
Extended Skills Training Scheme – FPS	78	11	7.1 : 1	89
Extended Skills Training Scheme – Hotel Services	1	-	-	1
Extended Training Scheme – Gozo	16	10	1.6 : 1	26
Total	352	192	1.8 : 1	544

(Source: Education Statistics 2001-2002. NSO, 2004)

Table 7: Part-time students attending the Institute of Tourism Studies (31st March, 2004)

Course	Males	Females	Ratio (M : F)	Total
Course of study	134	29	4.5 : 1	163
Total	134	29	4.5 : 1	163

(Source: Education Statistics 2001-2002. NSO, 2004)

The above tables show that male students outnumber females both in full-time and part-time courses within the Institute of Tourism Studies. Moreover, according to the Educational Statistics 2001 – 2002 published by the NSO (2004) males outnumber females in courses related to food preparation and extended skills training, while females outnumber males in the courses of travel agency operations and tour guiding.

Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) Apprenticeship Scheme

In December 2003, 1,471 males and 254 females enrolled for the ETC Apprenticeship Scheme. Statistics²⁰ show that there were no females in the following courses: Auto Electrical, Building Tradesmen, Trowel Trades, Electrical Servicing, Electrical Installer, Electrical Maintenance, Foundation in Construction in Stone, Jewellery, Mechanical Fitter, Motor Vehicle Fitter, Motor Vehicle Marine, Plumber, Sheet Metal, Stained Glass, Stone Carver, Stone Dressing, Tile Laying and Plastering, Vehicle body repairer, Welder/burner fabrication, Wood Carving, Woodwork, Applied Information Technology, Applied Mechanical Engineering, Computer Aided Design, Graphic Design, Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning and Motor Vehicle Technician. On the other hand, no males applied for the course of beauty therapist.

Gender representation in vocational training

Maths and a science subject (including Physics) which are compulsory curricula in Maltese schools, can ultimately increase the entry of girls into scientific professions. In addition, a campaign aimed at encouraging more girls to study Science, Engineering and Information Technology was organised in Malta in 2003. However, unlike tertiary education, the large gap in technical education still persists. While there has been a great improvement in female's take-up of post-secondary and tertiary academic studies, women remain over-represented in the caring and educational sectors and their share of vocational training remains negligible in traditionally male domains. On the other hand, females predominate in the secretarial and commercial vocational courses.

Research²¹ shows that the majority of male students are keen to explore different types of jobs, while female students are more likely to aim to enter 'traditional female jobs'. This is the case as most females still believe that childcare and home-management remains their absolute domain. Women's perception of the vocational route to a career appears still to be shaped by the stereotype of the technical world being a male one. In this regard, the strengthening of the career guidance and counselling function and the use of gender specific pedagogical styles is fundamental. Therefore more education regarding gender roles and stereotypes is required in schools.

²⁰ ETC, 2004

²¹ Bugeja & Muscat, 2002

Tertiary Education

The Education Act (Cap 327), (1988) places an obligation on the state to provide free tertiary education to all students with the necessary entry qualifications. Students receive a monthly maintenance grant for the whole duration of their first degree course together with a one-time grant. These provisions are meant to encourage and support students in their studies and to increase the number of students following tertiary education.

Educational profile

Over the past years, the gap between women's and men's educational attainment has narrowed. The proportion of females who opt for tertiary education is rising. In fact in their study Debono et. al. (2004) found that the University of Malta is registering an increasing number of female students. Moreover in their study they also noted a substantial increase in older women aged 41 years or over who graduate from University. Older persons, especially females, are getting more University qualifications, showing that Lifelong Learning in Malta is gaining importance.

Educational statistics²² show that 57.1 per cent of the total number of graduates were female. However, in spite of a higher participation rate of females in University, there is still some evidence of gender segregation in education and subject choice. In their study of 2004 Debono et.al found that the ratios of males and females graduating from specific faculties and institutes reveal that the traditional gendered division of professions still exist.

Research²³ shows that females are more likely to graduate in Education, while they are under-represented in Arts, Engineering and Architecture. In addition, women are poorly represented in information technology (IT) and information technology and communication (ICT), both in education and within the higher-skilled, higher paid jobs in industry. On the other hand males are more likely to graduate from Engineering, IT, Sciences and Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy (FEMA). However, according to Debono²⁴ there seems to be a tendency in University faculties and institutes towards more equal gender representation. For example, the traditionally male-dominated faculties including Laws and Medicine & Surgery have become balanced over time.

²² NSO, 2004

²³ Debono et.al., 2004

²⁴ *ibid*

Table 8: Graduates from faculties/ institutes by gender.

	Males		Females	
	Total	%	Total	%
Arts	20	5.0	61	8.0
FEMA	128	31.9	170	22.2
Education	50	12.5	259	33.8
Engineering	22	5.5	5	0.7
Laws	39	9.7	73	9.5
Medicine & Surgery	12	3.0	24	3.1
Science	15	3.7	13	1.7
CCT	15	3.7	29	3.8
IHC	27	6.7	68	8.9
CLS	15	3.7	20	2.6
Others	45	11.2	40	5.2
Total	401	100	766	100

(Source: Debono et.al (2004) Career Outcomes of Graduates: A Career Guidance Tool)

Moreover, educational statistics of 2004 published by the NSO show that female student population at University was the highest within the FEMA, the Faculty of Education, the Institute of Health Care (IHC) and the Faculty of Arts. On the other hand, the most popular faculties amongst males were again the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy, the Faculty of Engineering, and the Faculty of Laws.

In addition, the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC)²⁵ undertook a research project regarding 'Women and Men in the IT Labour Market. This research showed that in the academic year 2003-2004:

- 28% of students graduating in IT related courses, including a Bachelor of Science with honours or a Diploma in Information Technology and a Bachelor of Science in Business and Computing at the University of Malta were females;
- Out of 537 students that started a course related to information, communications and technology at the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) 18% were females.

Furthermore, statistics²⁶ show that from the total 233 students who are currently following the B.Sc (Hons.) in IT at the University of Malta, 19 % are female. In the academic year of 2002-2003, 23.4% of female university graduates were in computer related courses. In 2003-2004 there was an increase of just 4%, while in the academic year of 2003-2004, 16% of IT students were females. In the academic year of 2004-2005, 18% of IT students are females. This shows that females currently make up less than one fifth of IT studies at tertiary level. On the other hand, women are still overrepresented in health, education and social courses.

²⁵ ETC, 2005

²⁶ University of Malta, 2005

Women and Science

Educational statistics²⁷ revealed that women were under-represented in science and engineering related occupations. However, this problem is not unique to Malta. For instance, in a study of six countries including UK, women were found to be under-represented among graduates in IT, electronics and communications.

One can argue that mentoring and role models schemes can be effective ways to encourage more women to take up science careers. However, there is a lack of female role models in the science field since women are underrepresented in senior positions in science and technology.

4.1.5 Promoting change of gender roles and stereotypes

Gender roles and stereotypes

Eliminating gender roles and stereotypes is paramount for the establishment of gender equality. This project aims to address the need to change behaviour, attitudes, norms and values which define and influence gender roles in society through education.

Overcoming gender stereotypes in and via education policies is important. Education is an influential agent via which awareness about gender equality can be raised, and in helping to eradicate stereotypical gender discrimination. Overcoming gender stereotypes in education, for example in education and materials, and to develop good practices in this field is also essential.

Hidden Curriculum and Gender Roles

Both the formal and hidden curriculum influence learning regarding gender roles and gender differentiation in society.

According to Measor and Sikes²⁸:

'Gender inequality is reproduced in schools in several ways, including the organisation of the school, the organisation and management of the classrooms and lessons, students' experience of the curriculum (both formal and hidden) and the teachers' activities and actions'.

Pedagogy involves relationships in the classroom including the interaction between the teacher and the students and the interactions among students. Pedagogy also includes recourses used and the teachers' teaching style, and also the cognitive style of the students. Gender is also taught through pedagogical tools. Therefore, schools should ensure that the resources availed of by the educational community do not undermine the principle of equality. In choosing and producing resources, the schools should actively explore and create texts and visual representations that promote the principle of equality²⁹.

School Textbooks

Textbooks play a very important part in gender equality. In fact, textbooks can hinder equal opportunities to both sexes if they are gender biased. Gender bias can also be taught 'implicitly' through the language and pictures used in books. According to 'A study on sexism in Maltese primary school textbooks'³⁰, gender roles and stereotypes are still pervasive in some textbooks, including the Maltese textbook '*id-Denfil*', the Religion textbook '*Lejn il-Missier*', and the

²⁷ NSO, 2004

²⁸ Measor and Sikes 1992

²⁹ NMC, 1999, p.31

³⁰ Commission for the Advancement of Women, 1989

English textbook 'Ladybird'. '*id-Denfil*' and '*Lejn il-Missier*' are currently in use. However, the Ladybird series, though still in use, will be replaced by new reading schemes.

In fact guidelines for choosing the suitable Reading Scheme have been circulated to all State schools. These guidelines include short descriptions of each scheme accompanied by website addresses for further information. For instance, the books in the reading scheme *PM PLUS (Nelson)* build on a store of known words. Children are meant to acquire a number of high-frequency words or sight words as they move along from one level to the other. The content of the books is suitable for the proper age groups, enhances gender equality and lends itself to thematic teaching and learning. Ultimately the schools will choose a reading scheme and will be given financial help to build up the scheme chosen gradually.

The NMC also suggests that gender-biased books should be used to create discussion around topics concerning gender rather than to disregard these books. However, some textbooks including '*id-Denfil*' which portrays stereotypical life and is also used when children are five years old and are still too young to start discussing gender.

The Social Studies subject is taught in Maltese primary schools. This subject is one of the subjects that can help children/students to develop further their gender identity. The Social Studies syllabus is divided in three main aspects including:

1. Social;
2. Historical; and
3. Geographical.

In their research Gender Equality in the Teaching of primary school Social Studies³¹ found that historical aspect of the social studies subject is gender biased, since male always dominate the scene. Results also show that the lack of gender equity in the Social Studies syllabus is being accepted by most teachers.

Moreover, in their research Cassar, Degiorgio & Ciantar (2003) found that some topics in the textbooks '*il-5 pass*' and '*id-Denfil*' portrayed an unbalance of the sexes since they lack women's contribution. In addition, in their study regarding the books used in Maltese Primary Schools the Commission for the Advancement of Women in 1998 found that particularly:

- *Id-Denfil* (series of the books of the Maltese Language);
 - *Lejn il-Missier* (series of the books of Religion); and
 - Social studies syllabus
- are gender biased.

According to the unpublished thesis 'PSD and Gender Roles'³², 'there is still a lot to be done for certain long-established stereotypes to be confronted and eventually removed'. According to Mifsud & Attard (2005) there is lack of gender equity in the Personal and Social Development (PSD) syllabus. These unexpected results led to the preparation and development of a resource pack on gender equality for PSD primary specialists covering years 4, 5, 6, and 7.

³¹ Cassar, Degiorgio & Ciantar, 2003

³² Mifsud & Attard, 2005

Therefore, one can argue that research shows that gender roles and stereotypes are still pervasive in primary and secondary school education, and as a result boys and girls are currently embedded with unequal career goals and aspirations.

One can also conclude that in order to reach 'gender equality'³³ in the teaching of primary Social Studies and PSD, several changes need to occur. These changes include an update of the present syllabus and change in some of the teachers' mentality, since some of the teachers might be unconsciously promoting gender bias.

Personal and Social Development (PSD)

Education is an appropriate channel to enable individuals to reach their full personal, social and moral development³⁴. One of the tools being used to achieve this goal is that students have access to Social Studies in their Primary School and Personal and Social Development (PSD) from Year 4 to the last year of secondary school. Some PSD sessions are aimed at tackling gender equality and at challenging stereotypes. The PSD syllabus covers years 1 to 7, however, PSD teachers are available from Year 4 upwards. Gender is tackled in PSD session in both primary and secondary schools.

Aims of PSD session in relation to gender in primary schools

During the PSD sessions that are related to the topic of gender, year 4 students look at what they understand by being either being a boy or a girl. The aim of these sessions is to allow both boys and girls to share equal talents, characteristics, strengths and hopes for the future. Following this, the aim of the mentioned sessions for year 5 students is to distinguish how family, the media, and society expect boys and girls to behave and to think how sometimes children receive rent treatment because they are boys or girls. Furthermore, during these sessions year 6 students explore the friendship between boys and girls and the mutual respect that should exist. The aim of these sessions is also to have the students to reflect on the roles of both genders as carers. While the aim of the session for the students of year 7 is to help students identify what role they take as a girl or a boy and to explore the influence that the media has on their decisions.

Aims of PSD session in relation to gender in secondary schools

In secondary schools various topics and issues in relation to gender are discussed during PSD sessions. These include growing up; society; physical development; responsible decisions; and aspects of relationships. The learning outcomes of the PSD sessions in secondary schools is to help students to understand sexual changes and gender sexual development; to become aware of issues related to gender and identity in society; to learn about the opposite gender's sexual development; to explore the gender stereotypes regarding relationships they encounter through the media and to understand how these stereotypes effect their personal dating relationships; and to recognise that gender role influences the various roles taken on in life and identify that gender behaviour could influence their work related behaviour.

The focus of PSD methodology is on Experiential Learning which implies the use of various exercises with the help of techniques such as brainstorming, group work, case studies, role plays, games, multimedia, and others. The lesson is structured in a way so as to incorporate processing. The lesson takes place in class where seating is in the form of a circle to allow more an open discussion. In each PSD group there is a maximum number of 15 students, who are encouraged to discuss issues related to needs and current topics, focusing both on intrapersonal, interpersonal,

³³ NMC, 1999, p.39

³⁴ NMC, 1999, p.63

social, environmental and citizenship issues. The teacher is there to facilitate the dynamics of the group rather than to instruct.

Gender Neutral Language

The use of 'man' as a generic noun or as an ending for an occupational title, such as Policeman, may imply incorrectly that all persons in the group are male. Sexist bias can occur when pronouns are used carelessly, as when the masculine pronoun 'he' is used to refer to both sexes and when the masculine or feminine pronoun is used exclusively to define roles by sex. For example 'the nurse' is referred to as 'she'. (APA, 2001)

To avoid rigidity in sex identity or sex roles, teachers need to choose language (nouns, pronouns and adjectives) that specifically describes the particular person, or use gender neutral language when speaking generically. Sensitivity to gender biased language in educational setting is important. Since, gender roles and stereotypes are also transmitted through language use.

4.1.6 The national action plan for gender mainstreaming: provisions for equality in education

One of the measures and objectives of the Malta National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004-2006 is the publication of Career Guidance Policy for Schools which should be published by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment. This policy aims to create an operational and conceptual framework to the area of career guidance. The policy will pay particular attention to the students who are at risk of dropping out of school and at risk of school failure. The policy aims to provide these students with the necessary skills for self-managing their educational and occupational paths. Moreover, a gender mainstreaming approach will also be adopted.

Another measure of the Malta National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004-2006 is the specialised programme for young mothers who are still attending school and are also part of the Programme '*Ghozza*'³⁵. This programme provides support services and an educational programme to single, pregnant young minors. The programme is intended to help service-users adopt a positive attitude towards motherhood whilst empowering them to pursue their education and career path.

4.1.7 Best practices

In the context of promoting gender equality via education, a number of actions have been taken by Malta, which can be promoted as good example for best practices. These include:

National Minimum Curriculum: The Curriculum Department acts as a curriculum change agent and supports quality at all levels. Gender equality is one of the guiding principles of the NMC. According to the NMC, 'the education system should be based on the principle of gender equality based on respect of gender difference'. The NMC also emphasises the fact that a gender perspective should also be integrated in all policies and practices relating to guidance provision. An advisory body has been set up to help schools meet the objectives of the NMC.

In-service training: Importance is given to in-service training for teachers. In fact, all teaching staff has to complete

35 The Guidance and Counselling section coordinates a Schoolgirl Mothers' Unit (Unit *Ghozza*), which is targeted at pregnant teenagers who might otherwise give up on schooling.

three days of in-service training per year. In addition, pedagogical and curricular initiatives have been supported through the setting up of focus groups to provide a wide range of professional development for teachers and school management teams through research work, educational projects, and parent and community participation.

Faculty of Education, University of Malta: Various courses in relation to gender equality are being organised at the University of Malta. Moreover, amongst other credits, 'Education & Equity issues' is one of the topics that is included in the Bachelors of Education (B. Ed) course at the University of Malta.

Maths, Science and Technology: In Malta, Mathematics and Technology are provided as mandatory subjects both in the primary and secondary school curriculum. Moreover, Science is taught as a separate subject at the lower stages of secondary, while Physics is a core subject of the secondary curriculum. Therefore, both male and female students are participating in maths, science and technology (MST) studies up to the secondary level. Moreover, compulsory curriculum including Maths and a science subject (Physics) can increase the entry of girls into scientific professions. In addition a campaign aimed at encouraging more girls to study Science, Engineering and Information Technology was organised in Malta in 2003.

PSD: PSD sessions do tackle gender issues and are aimed at challenging stereotypes.

Home Economics: The optional subject of Home Economics is made available to both boys and girls. In fact, the number of male students choosing Home Economics is increasing. Through the subject of Home Economics boys are becoming acquainted to family responsibilities including housework and child rearing tasks.

School textbooks: New school textbooks are being revised with importance being given to eliminating gender stereotypes.

The above mentioned initiatives show how gender equality is being implemented within and via education. The above mentioned practices are very significant since they are enforcing gender equality and are challenging gender stereotypes.

4.1.8 FETE E-forum. Questions and interview reports

As part of the research interviews and discussions were held with the Maltese national partners, including Mr Raymond J. Camilleri (Director, Curriculum Management, Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment), Ms Bernadette Gerada (Education Officer, Teachers Documentation Centre, Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment), and Dr Carmel Borg (Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Malta). During these interviews the FETE e-forum questions (Appendix A) were discussed. The e-forum questions tackled various issues including amongst others:

- The influence of the family on children's choice of subjects and school enrolment;
- The issue of multiculturalism in relation to education policies;
- Students' drop-out-rates;
- Co-education; and
- Societal influences in relation to students' choice of subjects and ultimately careers.

Role of the family

Education and gender develop and are influenced by society at large and smaller nuclei such as the family. One of the issues that emerged during the interviews was that in some cases the family has an influence on the children's choice of subjects and school enrollment. This is mostly evident when families have their own business. In such situations, children are more likely to choose subjects that are related to their family business. Moreover, in these cases, students are less likely to continue to further up their studies after age 16 (compulsory education) but rather are more likely to start working within their family business. Moreover, it was also pointed out that boys and girls prefer to engage in the environments made available to them by parents.

In addition, another issue that came forward was that in view of the teaching profession, there is a relation between the family's social class background and the enrollment to the Bachelor of Education Honours B.Ed (Hons) course. In fact, research shows that there is a relationship between working class background and enrollment in the B.Ed (Hons) course. Moreover, in some cases parent's employment influences students' prospects for career choice. For instance, if there is a tradition of teaching within the family, students are more likely to choose teaching as a profession. Furthermore, the influence of the family on the students' subject choice can also be observed within the faculty of education (University of Malta), when students who had previously enrolled in various courses, including law and pharmacy, drop out from these courses and enroll in the B.Ed (Hons) course. One of the reasons that students give for this change in course enrollment, is that they were previously inclined to enroll within the B.Ed (Hons) course, however, they were influenced by their family to enroll in other courses.

Another point that came out during the interviews was that sometimes parents push students to choose subjects that are not in reality relevant to the current labour market. Ultimately, these students will then find it difficult to find employment.

In conclusion, from these interviews it was pointed out that although in some instances the family influences students' choice of subjects and school enrollment, in the majority of the cases the family guides rather influences students' subject choice. In fact, an important issue that emerged during the interviews was that the family is not the only factor that influences subject choice but rather a number of various factors, including the media and peers, influence student's subject choice and school enrollment.

Multiculturalism

The main issue that emerged in relation to the challenge of the integration of multiculturalism within schools was that until now in Malta, students of different race or socio-cultural background are still in a minority within schools. Therefore, up till now, the issue of multiculturalism is still not a big challenge for the Maltese education system. However, the number of students of different religion, race or socio-cultural background is on the increase. For

example, due to the influx of migrants living at Bugibba and the vicinity areas, the number of students of different socio-cultural background that have enrolled at the school situated at *San Pawl il-Baħar* has increased.

Another point that came forward during the interviews was that the NMC document recognizes the importance of full inclusion. In fact, according to the NMC 'the education community must ensure equality of access to the education system without discrimination on the grounds of ability, gender, religion, race or socio-cultural and economic background'. (NMC, pg 25)

In addition, another issue that came forward was that at the level of awareness and sensitization of teachers and education staff to multiculturalism Malta is at an advanced level. In fact, the issue of multiculturalism is tackled during the:

- B.Ed (Hons) course – During this course all students are exposed to multicultural issues.
- Masters degree – Masters in Diversity - which is offered at the University of Malta.

Moreover, a one day seminar in relation to effective schooling vis-a-vis multiculturalism was organised in October 2006. An American educationalist Marie Shiels - Djouadi has addressed the school heads' seminar in Malta regarding diversity in Education. In addition, the Faculty of Education within the University of Malta is involved in programme that is dedicated to diversity, which also includes the issue of multiculturalism. However, in relation to multiculturalism in Malta there is a gap between the pedagogical level and the level of awareness. Nevertheless, this gap is going to be addressed in the near future.

On the other hand, in relation to the integration of different religious practices in schools, in Malta there is a Church-State agreement vis-a-vis the teaching of religion in schools. This agreement stipulates that the Roman Catholic religion is taught within Maltese schools. Therefore until now, students of different religions have the option not to follow the religion lesson.

In relation to the influence of different religions and cultural practices on gender issues and policies in Malta, this is not the case since the 'Equality for men and women Act (Cap 456)' safeguards gender equality.

Student drop-out rates

The main point that came out of the interviews was that until now, in Malta, male drop-out rates are not alarming. Moreover, it was also emphasised that the fact that more females are continuing their studies does not imply that males are being discriminated within the education system. On the other hand, the fact that more females are enrolling at higher educational levels shows that gender equality has been achieved in relation to access to education for both genders.

Moreover, it was also pointed out that in relation to school drop-out rates two key policy documents have been published in Malta. These two documents include: 'For All Children to Succeed', which was developed by the Ministry of Education; and 'A Better Quality of Life', which is the Prime Minister's 2006-2010 Pre-Budget Document. These two policy documents include clear objectives for improving the educational opportunities and achievements of all Maltese citizens, irrespective of gender.

Moreover, it was also pointed out that according to the 'Strengthening the Matsec system – Matsec report', the number of registrations for the Matriculation Certificate has continued to increase. In fact, about 80% of 16-year-olds sat for the SEC exams. This shows that there is an increase of interest and an awareness that certification is necessary for further education and an asset for the labour market. However, there is a gender discrepancy in regards to registration. In fact, the gap between males and females has widened even more than in previous years. According to the MATSEC report (2005) there is a gender discrepancy of 17.4% more females that registered for the examinations than males. This gender difference is even more evident when one considers the results the 18-year-old cohort. Out of the 5,314 children born in 1987, 23.2% were awarded the Matriculation Certificate in 2005 and gained admission to University. These represented 30.3% of the girls and only 16.5% of the boys who were born in 1987. This gender gap requires further study and action.

Co-education

In Malta, State secondary education is single-sex. During the interviews, it was pointed out that various researchers claim that single-sex schools and classrooms create less gender-related stumbling blocks than in the case of co-education. This is because research shows that in classrooms girls tend to suffer academically because teachers sometimes pay more attention to boys. However, on the other hand, studies show that boys' and girls' social skills are enhanced through coeducation. Both male and female students, that are in a coeducation system can gain more experience in their interacting and relationships skills with members of the opposite sex.

Another important point that was raised was that although till to date secondary education is single-sex, this does not imply that in the future male and female students will not be mixed during some lessons, such as during arts and music and school breaks. However, this idea is till in the side-line.

Societal influences: Gender roles and stereotypes

One of the main points that emerged from the interviews was that a number of variables are influencing students' subject and course choices. These factors include peers, media, role models, parents, educational experience, and others. In relation to the questions of the teacher's aids, including school textbooks, it was emphasised that new school textbooks are being evaluated by a team which is made up of the education officers within the teachers documentation centre, representative of the faculty of education and a subject coordinator or expert of the subject. For instance, the textbook '*Ambjent Soċjali*' has been evaluated to check whether gender stereotypes featured in this book. Moreover, another point that came forward was that teachers' resources and school textbooks need to satisfy the principles of the NMC, including gender equality. If for instance, new school textbooks do not satisfy the principles of the NMC, including gender equality, the textbook will not be chosen. On the other hand, research³⁶ shows that gender roles and stereotypes are still pervasive in some Maltese textbooks such as '*id-Denfil*' that are still being used in primary schools. However, according to the NMC, rather than disregarding these books and other teaching resources that are sensitive to equality issues, teachers could use these resources as themes for discussion in relation to topics such as gender discrimination. During the interviews it was pointed out that the issue regarding the replacement of the Maltese textbooks is very complex, thus rather than disregarding such books they can be used for discussion.

Another point that came forward was that although there is a higher participation rate of females at university level, there is a gender imbalance in some of the subjects. For instance, females are underrepresented in some courses

³⁶ A study on sexism in Maltese primary school textbooks' commission for the Advancement of women, 1989.

such as engineering. On the other hand, males are underrepresented in some courses such as B.Ed (Hons). In fact, statistics³⁷ show that at present the number of students attending the B Ed (Hons) course at University is 414 females and 116 males. However, it was emphasised that the gender imbalance in student's choice of subject at University level is changing. In fact, there is a tendency in University faculties and institutes towards more equal gender representation. For example, the traditionally male-dominated faculties including Laws and Medicine & Surgery have become balanced over time.

Moreover, it was pointed out that according to the Matsec Report (2005) at Advanced level, subjects there was a significantly higher proportion of females who registered for all the languages (with the exception of Russian), Accounting, Biology, Chemistry, Home Economics, Marketing, Philosophy, Religious Knowledge and Sociology. Whereas, males predominated in Advanced level Computing, Graphical Communication, Physics and Pure Mathematics. In addition, at Intermediate level, a higher proportion of females than males were observed in Biology, Chemistry, English, Environmental Science, French, Home Economics, Information Technology, Maltese, Philosophy, Physics and Sociology. Whereas at Intermediate level males predominated in Accounting, Applied Mathematics, Computing and Engineering Drawing/Graphical Communication. In addition, it was also noted that while more males than females tended to study Pure Mathematics at Advanced level, more females than males tended to study this subject at Intermediate level.

In Malta, the same choices of subjects are offered to both female and male State secondary schools. During the interviews it was also pointed out that gender imbalance in choice of subjects is less pervasive in compulsory secondary education. This is because maths, technology and physics are compulsory for both genders at secondary level State schools. Moreover, at secondary level more male students are opting to choose the optional subject of Home Economics. Whereas, female students do choose science subjects, such as biology and chemistry.

In conclusion, it was emphasized that due to the educational system's commitments to the NMC, the education community has the responsibility to ensure gender equality within the education system. In fact according to the NMC the education system has to ensure that both boys and girls: *'follow the same curriculum; are catered for in a manner that ensures equal access to the same work opportunities; are exposed to the same educational experience; and that they should have the opportunity to effectively choose the subjects they want to learn and to make an informed choice'* (NMC, 1999, p40).

Interview - Policy Development

As part of the research an interview was conducted with Ms. Micheline Sciberras (Director, Policy Development & Programme Implementation, Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment). The aim of this interview was to gain a better understanding of educational policies in relation to gender equality.

The principle of diversity is one of the fundamental principles that the education system as a whole. In fact, Ms Sciberras stated that: 'the objective of the education system is the fulfillment of the potential of every individual irrespective of ability, gender, age, religion, race or socio-cultural and economic background'. Equity within the education system always needs to be promoted.

37 Office of the Registrar, University of Malta.

The new directorate of the Policy Development & Programme Implementation, Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (MEYE) has been set up since February 2006. The role of the directorate is to develop policies within the Ministry that ultimately improve the quality of service provision available to all its stakeholders. A number of policy documents associated with ten major areas, have been developed by the Policy Development & Programme Implementation department. These include:

1. Early Childhood Development and Care Report
2. For all Children to Succeed: A Network Organization for Quality Education in Malta
3. School Attendance Improvement Report
4. Career Guidance (Draft)
5. Inclusion and Special Education Review Report
6. MATSEC: Strengthening a National Examination System
7. State Higher Education Funding (Chalmers Report)
8. National Commission for Higher Education
9. Adult basic Skills (Draft)
10. National Life-long learning Policy (Draft)

The majority of the above mentioned documents have been published. While, three policy documents, including career guidance document, the adult basic skills policy report and the national life-long learning policy document will be published in the near future. Ultimately these reports will be added up to provide a national life-long learning policy document. It is interesting to note that the above listed policy documents include the whole life-long learning process of an individual. In fact, one can notice that the policy documents deal with the primary and secondary education, higher education, and adult learning. Ms Sciberras stated that although no particular policy document targets gender equality, however, it is a variable in all the policy documents. In fact, the policy documents are indirectly related to gender equality. For instance, the career and guidance document that will be published in the near future emphasizes the fact that career guidance needs to be more expanded, diversified and improved to prevent gender stereotypes. Moreover, the policy document 'For All Children to Succeed' includes clear objectives for improving the educational opportunities and achievements of all students, irrespective of gender.

In addition, Ms Sciberras argued that the MEYE also deals with employment issues and has a role in increasing and facilitating females' participation into the labour market. For instance, the policy document 'Early Childhood Development and Care Consultation Document' which was developed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (MEYE) with representation from the Ministry of Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS) deals with the issue of the providing quality early childhood education and care. Ultimately, improving the quality of provision of childcare will also impact on female employment, since research shows that the lack of the provision of childcare services is one of the factors that hinder females from entering into the labour market.

Regarding the issue that more female and male students are furthering their studies, Ms Sciberras stated that this fact shows that gender equality has been achieved in relation to access to education for both genders. Another point that came forward during the interview was that although there are a higher number of female students that are continuing to further their studies, a gender imbalance can be found in some of the subjects. For instance, in relation

to science subjects females are underrepresented in some courses including engineering, mathematics and IT, whereas they are overrepresented in medical and pharmacy courses. On the other hand, there is a lack of male students in the education course. As a result there is a low number of male learning support assistants and male teachers in primary schools and kindergarten. Nonetheless, Ms Sciberras emphasised that the gender imbalance in student's choice of subject is decreasing. In fact, traditionally male-dominated faculties including law and medicine have become gender balanced over time. Therefore, the challenge of the education system is to continue to balance out the subject areas for both genders. For instance, this can be done through the correction of and awareness of societal myths and misconceptions regarding gender-stereotyped courses and through the provision of a career guidance policy. Another incentive could be the increase in maintenance grants for students who enrol in courses that are showing signs of low enrolment, but yet are areas of high national importance. Ms Sciberras also maintained that the career guidance policy document that will be published in the near future indicates the need to focus on guidance and counselling services separately.

Equity was another issue that was discussed during the interview was. One of Malta's education reforms in the State compulsory education involves the networking of State schools to form Colleges that are driven by a collaborative and competitive commitment. The aim of this reform is to provide better education systems and schools. Another objective is that 'within a college network of schools every child will have a better claim to equity of provision within the educational ecology' (For All Children to Succeed, 2005). As part of this reform St. Benedict's College which is one of the four pilot Colleges, including Cottonera and Gozo, has been inaugurated in September 2005. St. Benedict's College consists of the *Birżebbuġja*, *Għaxaq*, *Gudja*, *Kirkop*, *Mqabba*, *Qrendi*, *Safi* and *Żurrieq* primary State schools and the new secondary level facility in *Kirkop*. While the primary school in the College are co-educational, as are all state primary schools in Malta, the secondary facility presently caters for boys. However, in the near future, building plans ought to take in consideration the requirement of a secondary level school for girls in the site of St. Benedict's College. The idea is that ultimately this College will incorporate boys' and girls' schools.

Consequently, the College innovative model is made up of a group of primary schools which will ultimately provide access to a secondary school level within the same College. This secondary school consists of both a Junior Lyceum and a Secondary School on the same premises for boys. Equity is being promoted within the College since a range of co-ordinated educational facilities, resources and services are being provided to students. In fact, Ms Sciberras stated that idea of setting rather than streaming is being adopted by this College. In fact, although Junior Lyceum and Secondary students have different classes for some of the subjects, they come together during amongst other the lessons of PE, PSD, arts and religion. Moreover, although students are grouped for maths, languages and science classes they have the possibility to move from one group to the other according to their ability.

Another issue that was discussed during the interview was co-education. Ms Sciberras stated that this issue was looked at in depth. Research comes forth with a variety of findings. While co-education has been found to bring advantages to its students, especial in the sphere of interpersonal skill development, single sexed schools, especially for girls, at times prove to be more beneficial academically. It will be interesting to see two schools, one for boys and one for girls, built on the same premises, which offer separate academic classes, but common sports and leisure facilities and activities.

Another point that came forward during the interview was that new trends have been developed within the teaching profession. About thirty years ago the teaching career was viewed as a good career prospect for males. However, this trend has changed over time, in fact nowadays there are more female than male teachers, especially within primary schools. One of the reasons why more females are opting for teaching as a good career prospect is that due to the working conditions they can combine work and family life. Another point is that childcare services are provided within the University premises for children from 2 years and over. Moreover, another trend that can be noticed is that females form other professions, such as social work, are enrolling in the P.G.C.E (1 year) course at the University of Malta, to take up teaching as a profession.

Moreover, the number of female head of schools and assistant heads is on the increase. On the other hand, Ms Sciberras stated that although the teaching profession is being feminized, other administrative, leading roles tend at times to be male dominated. This is not always the case. Within the education sector, it has been common to have female directors, although there are other moments in time when the key positions are held by males. Since, many women have not taken a career break but kept on investing in their career path, there has been an increase of women participating in key roles. Individuals are also assessed, not solely by experience, but by qualifications and competence.

Another point that was discussed during the interview was the plans for the future in relation to gender equality within the education system. Ms Sciberras' aspiration is for all children to have a positive education experience and that students will view the school as an enjoyable place. In conclusion, Ms Sciberras stated that the aim is to further achieve accessibility and equity within the education system irrespective of gender, race, religion and economic background.

4.1.9 Conclusion and Recommendations

Education is imperative for the elimination of all forms of discrimination, including gender bias and discrimination. This report shows that Malta has gone a long way in implementing gender equality in education. This can be seen in the National Minimum Curriculum and the Implementation of the Curriculum. However, despite the effort towards having gender education in and via education in reality improvements still need to be made in relation to gender equality.

The report 'Proceedings National Curriculum on its Way', (2001) presents some major concerns and challenges being faced by schools in the local context with regards to early childhood education. Although access to education, irrelevant of gender, is formally guaranteed through the NMC, research³⁸ shows that gender equality is still not being reached. This is because the gender equality is much more than access to education. It also involves the change in the students' and teachers' gender roles and stereotypes. Therefore, more emphasis needs to be placed on promoting a change in gender roles and stereotypes.

The following recommendations are being proposed with the aim of promoting gender equality in and via education:

Subject and Career Choice

According to the 'Proceedings: National Curriculum on its Way'³⁹ subject choice, is very often skewed by gender. In fact gender segregation regarding subject choice and ultimately career choices still exists. Therefore, students' subject and career choices need to be evaluated. For instance, career guidance teachers need to encourage both girls and boys to consider non-stereotypical subjects and courses, ultimately influencing career choices.

³⁸ Proceedings National Curriculum on its Way, (2001)

³⁹ Proceedings National Curriculum on its Way, (2001) p.371.

Career Guidance

In Malta, career guidance is offered at secondary schools. It would prove beneficial if career guidance is offered at an earlier stage, even at primary school level, to help the younger students become better aware of gender stereotypes and to ultimately be able to make informed choices. Thus, students will start to reflect on their skills and competencies rather than being influenced by gender roles and stereotypes, even when choosing optional subjects at Form 1.

This recommendation can be supported by research⁴⁰ which shows that most of the students decide which course they would like to follow between primary and sixth form for practically all courses except dentistry and healthcare degrees.

School Textbooks

An important task for the elimination of gender stereotypes is the use of gender neutral material and language. This report points out that some of the Maltese textbooks are gender biased. Therefore it is imperative that such textbooks are replaced by gender neutral textbooks. In addition, women need to become more visible in history textbooks.

Role models

A change in gender roles and stereotypes can also be promoted through the use of role models. For instance, teachers could:

1. Distribute to students articles in professional journals written by female research scientists or mathematicians;
2. Invite recent female graduates who have graduated in science, mathematics, engineering or other technical fields recounting their experience about university and/or other institutions; and
3. Create electronic mentoring programs for both male and female students to connect them with adults working in areas of interest to them.

Parental Awareness programmes

A holistic strategy needs to be adopted when addressing gender stereotypes. For instance, more parental awareness programmes in relation to gender equality can be organised to help parents to reflect on and to become more aware of gender roles and stereotypes.

Addressing gender imbalance within the teaching profession

One of the major concerns related to the feminization of the teaching profession is the lack of male role models for children attending primary and kindergarten schools. Males are underrepresented in primary schools and absent in kindergarten schools. The absence of males is of a concern especially in cases where children do not have a male role model at home. Thus, these children are missing out on the relationships with healthy male role models. Therefore, initiatives, such as publicity campaign, need to be implemented to encourage males to take teaching as a profession.

Equity policy

Gender equality can be reached through a proposal of a specific equity policy. The development of an equity school policy needs to entail the introduction of explicit aims for promoting gender equality and change in gender roles and stereotyping, in educational strategic plans and other strategies for practice in the management, teaching and learning in schools.

40 Micallef 2003.

4.2 Cyprus

4.2.1 Introduction

Cyprus is a small island with relatively poor natural resources and, with a turbulent history. It is only natural that Cypriots have turned to education so as to improve their standards of living. This is manifested in the high percentage (36%) of Cypriot tertiary education graduates, age 30 –34, compared to the average of their counterparts in the EU25 is only 24.3%⁴¹.

It is generally agreed that a better education increases the prospects in the quest for employment. A rise in education increases human capital and, as a consequence, higher levels of human capital and education contribute, among other things, to higher socioeconomic conditions. Better social and economic circumstances foster higher levels of employment, which consequently lead to improved standards of living and potentially higher income⁴². Furthermore, high educational levels combined with high socioeconomic levels might act as a catalyst against discrimination and exclusion practices, as they tend to reduce prejudice. Moreover, education is an ideal mean to diffuse and communicate ideas, acting as a driving force for a socially well integrated society⁴³.

Discrimination against women in Cyprus has been decreasing, as women are becoming more assertive. Women's representation in all walks of public life has been constantly increasing in the island of Cyprus. In particular, the harmonization of the national law with the *Acquis Communautaire* has played a significant role. In politics, women have doubled their seats in the national parliament (from 5%⁴⁴ to 11%⁴⁵) and have occupied significant governmental positions (e.g. that of the ombudsperson). In the economy, women have almost doubled the companies they own (from 12% of all registered companies up to 21%⁴⁶). In education, they pursue qualifications equal to those of men, as it is extensively analyzed in this section. However, there is currently no woman present at the Cabinet of Ministers, a setback considering that Cyprus first president, Makarios, appointed the first woman minister back in the 1960s. In fact, no government has ever had the political will to appoint more than one woman as ministers. The pay gap still exists (women earn nearly 75% of what men earn for similar jobs⁴⁷), decision-making positions in education and in the higher level of education are still a 'men's club'.

In the framework of this section regarding Cyprus, the provisions on equality of opportunities in education based on the National Plan for Gender Mainstreaming will also be analyzed. Then the characteristics of the current educational system in Cyprus will be presented in order to identify areas where gender equality and equal opportunities still need to be enhanced. Conclusions are drawn after statistical data, textbook analyses, and relevant literature have been presented. Based on the literature review and best practices, recommendations will then be made, with the aim to be taken into account when drafting a potential action plan in reference to gender imbalances and stereotypes in education.

41 Statistics of Education, 2003/4

42 Drousiotis, Annabel (1995), 'Factors Narrowing Interethnic Occupational Differences. How Important is Education (Dissertation)

43 Shumacher, E. F. (1973) *Small is Beautiful: Economics as If People Mattered*. New York, Perennial Library Harper & Row Publishers

44 1996 parliamentary elections

45 2001 parliamentary elections

46 Ellinas, Lina (2005) 'The Gender of Entrepreneurship in Cyprus: A Comparative Study Between Women and Men Entrepreneurs'

47 Labor Statistics 2003/4

4.2.2 The role of the Ministry of Education and Culture in ensuring equal opportunities

The Ministry of Education and Culture is focused on ensuring equal opportunities in education for both genders on a non-discriminatory basis, both in the urban and in the rural areas, and, at the same time, at all levels of education. Education in Cyprus is free from the age 5-8/12–18 (i.e. primary education and secondary – Gymnasium and Lyceum) and compulsory from the age of 5-8/12 until the age of 15 (i.e. primary education and secondary at Gymnasium level).

Table 9: Levels of Education in Cyprus

Level	Subdivisions
Primary	Kindergarten Pre-primary (1 year) Primary (6 years)
Secondary	Gymnasium (3 years) Lyceum (3 years) Or Technical (3 years)
Tertiary	University Colleges Higher Institutes Academies

Recently, a number of positive actions undertaken by the Ministry of Education have resulted in more balanced opportunities for male and female students. An illustration was produced to be used with the intention to encourage children to perform non-traditional role-play in kindergartens as an incentive to change stereotypes on gender roles. Another action promoted recently is the revision of school textbooks, the introduction of subjects such as 'Domestic Science' (scientific and technological knowledge and achievements) and 'Home Economics' to both boys and girls. In high schools, 15-year old students are introduced to 'Communication and Gender Relations' as well as to 'Sexual Education' in some urban and rural areas. The latter one is a pilot program.

Notwithstanding the activities mentioned above and the constant improvements that have been taking place addressing the issue of gender equality in education, some inequalities still exist. The consequences of these inequalities are particularly important with reference to women's qualifications and employment opportunities, which might lead to lower ranking positions, lower salaries and as a consequence of this, a limited financial power.

4.2.3 National structures for the implementation of the legal framework

The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus guarantees equality for all the citizens. In recent times, a relevant number of international conventions have been signed and ratified, such as the UN Conventional and the Additional Protocol. This process was mainly driven by the harmonization with the Acquis Communautaire, a plethora of legal measures related to women's status have been enacted, as for example the Equal Pay and Equal Opportunities in Employment Law etc. In addition to a number of UN conventions the Government has signed, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the House of Representatives ratified a considerable number of laws to enhance gender equality on the island. These refer, for example, to the modernization of the Family Law, Employment Law, Maternity Protection, Parental Leave, among others.

The national coordination body within the Government to address gender equality issues is the National Machinery for Women's Rights (NMWR), which has primarily a consultative and monitoring role. Established in 1994, the NMWR has a very important role to play in the promotion of equality. It is the major institutional structure promoting the integration of equality into all sectors of Government policies and programs. It is represented by a system of four bodies, which comes under the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. The NMWR consists of representatives of the major women's organizations, trade unions and government departments and it is under the auspices and chairmanship of the Minister of Justice and Public Order.

The NMWR deals with all matters concerning women, focusing on the elimination of legal discrimination against women and the promotion of real equality between women and men. More specifically, the National Machinery advises the Council of Ministers on policies, programs and laws promoting women's rights. It monitors, coordinates and evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of these programs and laws. It carries out information, education and training programs on relevant issues, supports and subsidizes women's organizations, contributes to the mobilization and sensitization of the Government Sector on equality issues and serves as a cooperation channel between the Government and NGOs working in this field.

The goal of gender mainstreaming has been incorporated for the first time in the new Five Year National Development Plan (1999-2003) under the special chapter on 'Women and Development'. The Republic of Cyprus acknowledges that an important component of the new strategy of gender mainstreaming is to set up mechanisms that will allow gender issues to be integrated into key sectors of government, as well as the private sector and civil society. To this end, it has developed close collaboration between government departments and the National Machinery for Women's Rights on the one hand, and other agencies such as academic institutions and NGOs on the other. The NMWR has been subsidizing NGOs in their programming of new initiatives as well as in the carrying out of research, training needs etc. The NMWR organizes consultancy visits and training seminars on gender issues on a regular basis as well as training programs on gender mainstreaming.

4.2.4 The national action plan for gender mainstreaming: provisions for equality in education

The National Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming is the strategic framework of the Republic of Cyprus to achieve modernization of social norms so as to exploit the total of the human resources, despite gender, as well as to eliminate any form of discrimination against women.

Objective 2 of the National Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming refers to the promotion of equality in education, technical training, science and research. Although there is a brief reference to the progress achieved in the general field of education, the focus is more on the remaining deficiencies and planned actions.

In particular, the shortcomings – mainly deriving from the literature - refer to the curricula (also hidden), manuals, teaching practices, teachers' expectations of male and female performance and behavior, the lack of courses that promote communication and companionship between the two genders, the 'androcratic' language, counseling, women's representation in decision-making bodies in education, students' choices etc.

The field of education provides for the elimination of all forms of discrimination (also gender discrimination) and for the building of tolerance and social justice in the framework of a democratic society. Important for the abovementioned realization is the introduction of gender mainstreaming in the following areas:

1. The primary, secondary and technical level of education (e.g. by increasing awareness regarding women's roles in today's society etc.)
2. Counselling: encouraging girls towards stereotypically 'male' professions
3. Teachers' sensitization/ awareness to identify inequalities in the education system and speak against them
4. Diffusion of the problematic on gender equality (e.g. improvement of women's position in all walks of public life)
5. Introduction of Gender Studies in tertiary education

Deriving from these conclusions, the National Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming makes the following recommendations:

1. A wide-scale research of a 'gender map' in education in Cyprus,
2. A configuration of modern educational material including gender mainstreaming,
3. A European convention on 'Education and Gender Equality',
4. The horizontal integration of gender studies at the University of Cyprus at the bachelor's and master's level,
5. A European convention on 'Social Gender Studies in the 21st Century'
6. A research on female teachers' and female students' (in the Pedagogical School) attitudes towards new technologies,
7. The design and the implementation of sensitization/ awareness programs for teachers on sex education and the appointment of companionship between the two genders with a simultaneous production of relevant educational packages and wider educational material
8. The enhancement and the dilating of the Health Education programs with the introduction of the course Sex Education and Gender Communication and Companionship, and
9. Introduction of the 'all-day'-school institution, which will allow students to remain at school studying or keeping themselves busy with artistic, pedagogic and sports activities with the support of suitably trained personnel.

4.2.5 Statistical analysis

There has hardly been any research on gender in education in Cyprus. Although research on education is growing

fast, gender is usually a missing variable. The secondary data are, therefore, limited mainly to statistical data provided by the Statistical Service⁴⁸ and sporadic publications on the subject, for instance on textbook analysis, chapters on education in national reports etc. In addition, some primary data from a teachers' workshop⁴⁹ on classroom attitudes and perceptions are presented.

Despite all corrective measures and progress achieved, the underlying issues arising from the statistical analysis with regards to gender equality in education are mainly the following:

- Women's under representation in decision making,
- The feminization of lower education on the one hand and
- Male dominance in higher education on the other hand,
- Students' stereotypical educational (and later professional) choices

It is interesting to note that the international practice of reporting statistical data disaggregated by gender always refer to data on men first.

Statistical data on teachers

Although female teachers outnumber men in pre-primary, primary and secondary education (except in evening schools, the latter hold the higher administrative positions. In particular, pre-primary education is filled with almost exclusively female teachers. There are only a few male teachers in the primary level. Despite the fact that their numbers increase in gymnasiums (the first three years of secondary education), male teachers numbers equal those of their female counterparts only in lyceums (the last three years of secondary education).

Table 10: Feminization of lower education 2003/2004

	Pre-primary %		Primary %		Gymnasiums/ secondary %		Lyceums/ secondary %	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Principals	0.5	99.5	40	60	67	33	75	25
HM assistants	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	40	60	54	46
Teachers	0.01	99.9	20	80	31	69	43	57

According to a research⁵⁰, factors hindering the promotion of female educators are: grading, additional qualifications, interview results. According to the Ministry's grading system, teachers receive a grade between 33 and 39. Whereas the majorities (55%) of male educators receive the grade 39, the majority of female educators (51%) receive 34-35. Men receive higher scores than women in professional training, professional competency, organization/administration/ human relationships, general attitude and action. Men also score higher than women in personal interviews for positions of promotion. Moreover women teachers possess less additional qualifications than their male counterparts.

⁴⁸ The latest published data refer to the academic year 2003/4. All data used in this report derive from this publication.

⁴⁹ Nicosia, 11 May 2006

⁵⁰ Cyprus Third, Fourth and Fifth Periodic (1993-2003) on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Nicosia, 2004

The Ministry's explanation regarding the disproportional numbers of male teachers as principals and principal assistants is related to the fact that 'in the past there were more male than female teachers; therefore, they have seniority, for instance, when compared with their younger colleagues' (who are women in their majority).

In other words, as the numbers of male teachers entering the primary and secondary levels of education are decreasing, the number of women in administrative positions will inevitably rise. In fact, as we will see later on, the Department of Education at the University of Cyprus is filled with almost exclusively female students. Hence, it can be assumed that the presence of male teachers in primary education can be considered as in danger of disappearing.

The situation in technical and evening schools is different. The numbers of male and female teachers are more balanced, but their representation in the principals' and principal assistants' positions is clearly in favour of men.

Table 11: Feminization of lower education does not apply to evening and technical schools 2003/2004

	Evening Schools		Technical Schools	
	%		%	
	M	W	M	W
Principals	100	0	89	11
HM assistants	79	21	85	15
Teachers	58	42	47	53

Likewise, the representation of women and men as inspectors and senior officers is not equal. It is again in favor of men. According to Ministry officials fewer women apply for such positions, as they involve longer working hours and more travelling.

Table 12: Inspectors and Senior Officers by Gender in Primary and Secondary Education 2003/2004

	Primary Education		Secondary Education	
	%		%	
	M	W	M	W
Inspectors	89	11	70	30
Senior Officers	67	33	100	0

The presence of men is particularly strong in the higher level of education (the University of Cyprus, private colleges, other national institutes etc.). In fact, as the ranks increase, the representation of women becomes almost non-existent.

Table 13: Ranks by Gender at the University of Cyprus (UCY) 2003/2004

	Men %	Women %
Professors	94	6
Associate Professors	86	14
Assistant Professors	67	23
Lecturers	65	35
Special Training Staff	44	56

Two out of three (66%) research assistants at the UCY are again men and one out of three (34%) are women. Conversely, when it comes to administrative (e.g. secretarial) personnel and academic support for students, it is mainly women who occupy these positions, 73% and 88% respectively.

Women's representation in other public and tertiary institutions is somewhat higher.

Table 14: Women and Men in other Tertiary Institutions 2003/2004

	Public%		Private%	
	M	W	M	W
Principals	90	10	79	21
Teaching Personnel	64	36	52	48

Statistical data on students

Enrolment for boys and girls in pre-primary education (51% and 49% respectively) primary education (51% and 49% respectively) and secondary education (49% and 51% respectively) is equal. The percentages vary only with reference to technical schools where boys form the vast majority and where girls choose more stereotypically female subjects such as fashion design. Equal are also the enrolment rates at universities abroad (men 51%, women 49%). At the UCY, however, we observe a feminization of the student body, as the majority of students are females (77%). One of the reasons might be the choice of programs of studies on offer. For instance, students might study education (a stereotypically female option) but not medicine (a stereotypically male option) at the UCY. A further reason might be Cypriot parents' desire to have their daughters 'near'.

It is important to understand why parents in Cyprus tend to encourage their daughters to become school teachers or public servants in order to be aware of how social norms affect students' educational and later professional choices. First and foremost, such positions provide excellent work hours and good remuneration packages. For example, primary school teachers work from 7.30a.m until 1.05p.m. Mondays until Fridays, have two full months of summer holidays, two weeks Christmas and two weeks Easter holidays and a considerable number of other school holidays. This obviously allows them to devote plenty of time to their other roles.

Similarly, public servants work from 7.30a.m. until 2.30p.m., but they have fewer holidays. It should come as little surprise that 78% of students registered for private lessons with the objective to pass the government exams are female and only 22% are male.

As the student body at the UCY consists mainly of female students, it is perhaps safer to use data concerning Cypriot students registered at universities abroad. Evidently, students' educational choices limit their professional prospects late on some programs of studies still show stereotypical influences, whereas in some others the gap is closing.

Table 15: Student Choices of Programs of Studies 2003/2004

	Men %	Women %
Education	29	71
Arts	16	84
Engineering	87	13
Computing	71	29
Business and Administration	51	49
Law	47	53
Architecture and Civil Engineering	54	46

In the past, women were satisfied with earning a bachelor's degree. Today, they pursue PhDs almost to the same extent as their male counterparts.

Table 16: Pursuing of Degrees 2003/2004

	Men %	Women %
PhD	56	44
Postgraduate	50	50
Undergraduate	45	55

Both the UCY and Intercollege, a privately owned college, have exhibited a considerable amount of research on women's issues. The university offers courses or modules such as 'Issues of Equality and Gender', 'History of Women's Education in Cyprus' etc. Intercollege, which has a strong record on gender research, such as 'Women Managers', 'Women Entrepreneurs' etc. has established the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, a non-profit research-oriented organization with the objective to increase awareness on gender issues in Cyprus civil society etc.

Adult education is addressed to both genders and classes are mixed. Despite the higher number of female participants, very few women register in stereotypically 'male' subjects, such as car mechanics, plumbers etc.

With regards to non-formal education, it seems that it is easier for men rather than for women to attend classes/workshops/ seminars so as to upgrade their knowledge or skills when these are offered outside the usual work hours.

Table 17: Vocational Training Courses 2003/2004

	Men %	Women %
HRDA ⁵¹	59	41
CPC ⁵²	85	15

However, when such courses are offered during regular work hours (Cyprus Academy of Administration), women tend to exploit such opportunities to a larger extent (54%) than their male counterparts (46%).

Statistical data on women in decision-making

Women's representation in decision-making positions has improved on the whole. However, it is still not equal to that of men. At the Minister's level it has even deteriorated. In the previous government, the Minister of Education and Culture used to be a woman, now it is his Excellency, Mr. Pefkios Georgiades.

At present, the Director of Culture Services is a woman. Moreover, in 1998, a woman was appointed member of the Public Education Service Commission for the first time. The ratio is one woman to four men. Similarly, in the Education Council, the ratio is 5 women to 25 men. The situation in the Council of the University of Cyprus is worse. The ratio is one woman to fourteen men.

Despite the fact that the majority of primary and secondary school teachers are women, they are underrepresented in their union bodies. In 2002, two women were elected to the Board of POED. (Primary School Teachers' Organization). In the year 2003, this number was doubled. In the same year, two women were elected for the first time, to the Board of OEDE (Primary Inspectors Association), bringing the ratio to 2:5. Furthermore, two women are members in the Central Council of OELMEK (Secondary General Education Teachers' Organization) (ratio 2:19), in the district councils of OELMEK, the ratio is better (11:38). Moreover, two women (ratio 2:19), are in the Central Council of OLTEK (Secondary Technical School Teachers' Organization), one of whom is the president.

The impact of education on employment and entrepreneurship

There is a direct link between the output of education and employment. The educational system, as well as students' choices, prepares young people for their entry into the labour market and determine considerably how high they can aim.

In Cyprus⁵³ legislators, senior officials and managers (positions mainly held by men – 85%) receive the highest rates of pay, followed by professionals, technicians and associate professionals, while workers in elementary occupations received the least pay (positions mainly held by women).

Females receive on average lower salaries than their male counterparts in the major occupational groups. In 2004, males received 33.5% higher rates of pay, compared to 33.7% in the previous year. The pay gap seems to be slightly but gradually closing.

⁵¹ Human Resource Development Authority

⁵² Cyprus Productivity Centre

⁵³ Labour Statistics (2004)

The difference in earnings is narrower for legislators, senior officials and managers and widest for machine operators and service and sales workers. These differences are attributable to differences in qualifications, years of service, duties and sector of activity and possible discrimination in some occupations.

Cypriots are known for their entrepreneurial spirit. Two landmarks have shaped the island's modern history and in both cases it was Cypriots' entrepreneurial spirit that boosted the island's economy. First, Cyprus gained its Independence in 1960 and with the air of optimism that anything was possible and anyone could become almost anything, Cyprus – up until then considered a developing country demonstrated a fast growing and flourishing economy. Second, Cyprus suffered the invasion and occupation of the Northern part of the island by the Turkish troops in 1974⁵⁴. The decisive factor why the island's economy not only did not collapse, but it also achieved to become one of the 22 countries⁵⁵ with the highest income per capita about two decades later⁵⁶.

In the past, entrepreneurial activity used to be a male domain. The number of women-owned businesses, however, has been constantly increasing. It rose from roughly 7,000 in 1995 to roughly 10,500⁵⁷ in 2003 or from 12% to 21%⁵⁸ of all registered enterprises in Cyprus. In other words, the percentage of female entrepreneurial activity has increased by 75%⁵⁹. Compared to a previous survey on Female Entrepreneurial Activity in Cyprus⁶⁰.

Perhaps, the most striking difference between women and men entrepreneurs regards their perceptions on the financial conditions prevailing as a result of their entrepreneurial activities. While three out of four (75%) men business owners state that the above mentioned conditions have improved, not even one out of three (30%) of women business owners claim the same positive outcome.

Men entrepreneurs (76%) appear to be more confident about the future of their company than their female (66%) counterparts. They believe that women have equal opportunities when engaging in entrepreneurial activity (80%), whereas only 42% of the women share the same faith, probably because of their multiplicity of roles.

As regards going digital, one of the major objectives of the European Union, it seems that both women and men entrepreneurs appreciate the potential opened up by new technologies, as 98% of male-owned companies and 94% of female-owned companies respectively possess a personal computer and are connected to the Internet. However, the former seem to pay more attention to opportunities provided by having their own website, as 75% of these do have their own website compared to only 53% in the case of women-owned enterprises.

On the whole, there seems to be a tremendous increase in the educational level of women entrepreneurs in Cyprus (from 34% to 88% of women with tertiary education qualifications).

4.2.6 School textbooks in Cyprus

It is widely acknowledged that school textbooks are not merely tools to transmit knowledge, but they also shape children's ideologies and assist them in their socialization process, introducing them to social and cultural values⁶¹. As gender roles are important for children's identity, it is essential to study how gender roles are portrayed in school textbooks⁶².

54 This caused the Republic of Cyprus the loss of 37% of its territory and the loss of 70% of its income sources. Moreover, one in three Greek Cypriots became refugees in their own country while unemployment shot up and reached 30% (Government of Cyprus: Official Homepage). In brief, the economy was shattered. As the Turkish invasion resulted in death, injuries, and missing people - mostly men-, women had no other alternative but to play an extremely important role in supporting their families and reconstructing the economy.

55 All information and data presented in this thesis concern the free areas, which are controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus.

56 The Human Development Index measures a country's achievements in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted income.

57 Census of Establishments, 2002

58 Labour Statistics, 2002

59 Ellinas, Lina (2005): 'The Gender of Entrepreneurship in Cyprus: A Comparative Study Between Women and Men Entrepreneurs

60 Ellinas, Lina (2004): 'Women Entrepreneurs in Cyprus: A New Dynamic in Cyprus Economy', Women in Management Review, Volume 19, Number 6.

61 Anagnostopoulou (1997)

62 Sapiro (1990)

The majority of school textbooks used in Cyprus schools are kindly donated by the respective Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Greece. Feminist analysis of Greek and foreign school textbooks has revealed the extent to which sexist hypotheses and prejudice are illustrated in textbooks. They not only support stereotypical roles, but they fail to cover the activities of both genders and incorporate degrading female portrayals⁶³. Women's world is often portrayed as that of wives and mothers⁶⁴. On the contrary, in most cases, there is quantitative and qualitative male dominance. On the whole, school textbooks are still – to some extent – a reproduction of patriarchal and stereotypical roles.

The school textbooks analysis presented in this report is the most recent; however, some books have been substituted in the meantime. Officials of the Ministry of Education and Culture have been invited to Greece to be briefed on new school textbooks. The analysis below refers to history, sociology, and Modern Greek textbooks.

History textbooks analysis

Research findings on history textbooks reveal women's absence or their indirect presence as 'people' or 'women and children' (as in 'civilians')⁶⁵. The word 'citizen' refers to those participating in public life and those who exercise the right to vote and stand in elections, to politicians, soldiers, and to the work force. These, however, are qualities more often relevant to men than to women.

Women's presence in public life is almost non-existent and is mainly limited, for instance, to queens who signed certain treaties because of their position. They are hardly portrayed as protagonists. Instead, they are considered to be admirable bystanders. On the whole, women are portrayed in their stereotypical roles as mothers, wives, or housewives. They are often portrayed in passive roles like wiping widowers or soldiers' mothers. Later, they are portrayed as workers, nurses or teachers and more rarely as fighters. In addition, the Greek language is androcratic. In other words, the male gender is used to imply both genders. Consequently, this has an impact on how school children's gender perceptions and their roles are shaped.

There is hardly any reference in history books of women's struggle for equality, and there is no reference whatsoever to their effect on the social or political level between the two genders. What is more, with reference to culture and civilization, women are hardly ever depicted as creators. The evolution of women's position is generally blurry.

The authors of the history textbooks are all male, but for one woman author of the school textbook of the third class (or class C). Moreover, book references and citations relegate to male authors.

Sociology textbooks analysis

In sociology textbooks there are references to social inequalities among social groups in fields like and education and labour and indirect mentioning of their consequences to the smooth functioning of democracy⁶⁶.

In certain extracts, issues on gender discrimination in labour arise. These relate, for example, to women being 'naturally destined' to undertake the household, which places them in a disadvantageous position pertaining to their democratic citizens' rights. Men's activities are related to public life and women's to private life.

63 Stanworth (1986)

64 Sapiro (1990)

65 Athanassiadou & Petridou (1997), Deligianni-Kouimtzi (2000)

66 Athanassiadou & Petridou (1997), Deligianni-Kouimtzi (2000)

Women are rather absent from sociology textbooks, therefore women role models are also absent. In the few extracts they are present, they are related to socially acceptable roles in marriage, family, and motherhood.

In some extracts, women's contribution as mothers is given as the reason for the belittling of their contribution historically. However, no effort is made to illustrate the importance of this role or to connect women's restriction in this role to their restricted citizens' rights.

Modern Greek textbooks analysis

In Modern Greek textbooks⁶⁷, women's representation is limited both in quantitative and in qualitative measures. Women are present in only 37% of the passages, usually in marginal roles and only 0.06% of the passages are by female authors.

Women figure frequently derive from low or middle social classes. Despite their bad financial condition, they rarely seek employment outside the house, and when they do, they find low-status employment, such as maids. Female work is not related to personal satisfaction, but to contributing to the family budget. Their entertainment, which is rare, is limited to their neighbourhood in the form of exchanging visits, narrating stories, gossiping etc.

Women's major roles are those of the mother, the wife, and the housewife. Secondly, they are those of a daughter, sister, grandmother, granddaughter, sister-in-law, and aunt. In other words, they are always defined according to their relation with someone (usually male) one. Mothers appear demanding of their children, but dismissive to their husbands (the head of the family). Only in cases where the husband is weak, sick or drunk do women gain a strong personality. The erotic element is absent and only indirectly implied in passages.

The household reflects a woman's social value. Issues of dowry arise, and unmarried women are represented as a burden to the family, as spinsters who are doomed to housework. The woman as sister is subject to her brother's control that functions as the projection of the 'father-master'.

Female stereotypes are formed through the lack of their mental potential and the emphasis on traditionally female qualities, such as virtuous, prudent, humble, respectful, loving and caring, gentle. Here, we could add their narrow-mindedness, love for gossip, prejudice, hesitation, fatalism, artlessness, slyness etc. Women are not assertive and do not easily express their emotions and desires, particularly the erotic ones. Women's multiplicity of roles in the new social setting is absent. The right to vote and women's penetration in the labour market are not taken into account. In passages, women's speech is usually narrated instead of uttered. Thus, they are deprived of their participation in making decisions that are relevant to them. Moreover they hardly address men and the later monopolize speech. Women are usually silent or half-express themselves, which makes them powerless. They are hardly ever assertive or argumentative.

4.2.7 Findings and best practices

Thirty primary school teachers, 21 female and 9 male teachers, from both urban and rural areas from all districts participated in a workshop organized last May in Nicosia. The workshop objective was to have an 'open-space' discussion to encourage brainstorming in order to identify problems on the following three areas:

67 Loppa-Goundaroulli (1999)

- Equality of opportunities between male and female teachers inside and outside the class
- Whether teachers behave the same towards boys and girls inside and outside the class and
- How children behave among themselves inside and outside the class

Equality of opportunities between male and female teachers

At first, the participants failed to come up with any issues pertaining to possible inequalities with reference to opportunities between the two genders. Indeed, they all agreed that there is no discrimination in legislation. In the course of discussion, inequalities affecting both male and female teachers came up.

Male teachers feel they are unequally treated, as they are obliged to spend 26 months serving in the military. They feel that they were, thus, two years late in entering their profession. As a consequence, they were late not only in commencing employment and receiving salary, but also in their promotion prospects, as women their age already had two more years of experience.

Moreover, male teachers registered discrimination taking place with reference to the classes/grades they have to teach. It is the norm that female teachers are given first-grade children to teach (the youngest that need more love and affection now that they have just left the nest), whereas older children in the fifth and sixth grade are usually given to male teachers.

What is more, male teachers might be more often expected to teach math and science courses whereas female teachers are expected to teach language, home economics etc. Their responsibilities seem to vary as well. When it comes to extra-curricular events, female teachers are expected to teach children to dance, whereas male teachers might take over sports competitions.

As far as furthering their education is concerned, women feel they are lagging behind mainly due to their multiplicity of roles. They feel it is a lot easier for their male colleagues to pursue a higher degree, as their wives will look after the children and the housework, but it does not quite work the other way round for female teachers. Having said that, let us reiterate on primary school teachers work hours. They work from 7.30 –1.05. So it is still a lot easier for female teachers than female employees in private companies to further their education.

Unionism seems to be one more issue of concern. Female teachers feel that it is easier for their male counterparts to engage themselves in unionism and pursue high-ranking positions, as this means using their spare time. Women's 'spare time' is already loaded with their child rearing and household tasks.

Teachers' behaviours towards boys and girls

Again, at first, the participants' first reaction is that they treat boys and girls equally. In the course of discussion, however, they spotted a different approach to the students of the two genders with reference to, class registers, their being naughty, responsibilities assigned and language stereotypes.

Although in high schools children's name appear on class registers in alphabetical order, in elementary schools they are segregated by gender, as boys' names appear first and girls' names follow. The explanation that this serves statistical purposes cannot be a valid one, since – as already mentioned – in high schools statistics work perfectly well in alphabetical order.

The teachers admitted that they treat boys and girls differently when they are being naughty. They are stricter with boys, who are expected to be tougher and handle 'verbal abuse', whereas they are much softer with the girls trying to save face for them, as they will burst out crying (or teachers think this is what they might do).

The participants further reflected the tasks and responsibilities assigned to both boys and girls and realized that they do not treat them in the same way. They will ask a girl to fetch them some water or water the flowers, but they will ask boys to move chairs and desks. Some talked about their experience with parents' objecting their boys to be involved in more 'female' responsibilities or to act out female roles in school plays. On the whole, it seems that it is acceptable for a girl to be a 'tom boy', but not the other way round.

Children's behaviour

The participants were finally asked to contemplate children's behavior inside and outside the class, whether boys treated boys differently than they did girls and vice versa.

The bottom line seems to be that children mime the stereotypes they experience at home. Boys are expected to behave in a 'male' way and girls are expected to behave in a 'female' way. In sports (and in breaks), boys play with boys (unless instructed otherwise) and girls play with girls. In quiz competitions, there are usually boys' and girls' teams, unless a boy or a girl is an exceptionally good student and might be invited to a team of the opposite gender.

4.2.8 Best practices

A number of positive actions have been introduced both in the public and in the private sector that can be considered as good practices.

Recent endeavours undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Culture have had a positive impact on creating more balanced opportunities for both male and female students. One such case in point would be the encouragement of children to perform non-traditional role-play in kindergartens as an endeavour to change stereotypes on gender roles. For example, girls might pretend to be truck drivers whereas boys might pretend to be nurses etc.

Another illustration is the revision of school textbooks with emphasis on eliminating stereotypes and sexist language. The introduction of subjects such as 'Domestic Science' (scientific and technological knowledge and achievements) and 'Home Economics' to both boys and girls has helped girls develop their 'scientific' skills and boys to get acquainted and see as commonplace housework and child rearing tasks. In high schools, 15-year olds are introduced to 'Communication and Gender Relations' as well as to 'Sexual Education' in some urban and rural areas (pilot program).

What is more, at the University of Cyprus there is currently an effort to enrich gender courses or to introduce 'the gender aspect' in some of its courses (e.g. in Education).

The focus on research on gender issues has increased. Private colleges, like Intercollege, or even political parties conduct surveys on gender-related topics frequently. The National Machinery for Women's Rights often supports these surveys financially.

4.2.9 Conclusions and recommendations

In the past few decades, steps have been taken in the right direction resulting in a quantitative and qualitative increase in the equality of opportunities for the two genders in almost all aspects of public life. The improvements seem to be even more astonishing in the field of education.

Statistical data reveal an increase of women occupying decision-making positions in schools. However, as the level of education increases, women's participation in such positions decreases. Students' enrolment numbers at all levels of education are very similar. However, they still seem to make stereotypical choices as most education (teachers' training) students are women and most engineering students are men. Old school textbooks have been replaced with textbooks including far fewer discriminatory portrayals, discriminatory language etc. As of the new academic year, school textbooks will be replaced again. Hopefully the new ones will promote equality and portray positive female images.

Equality of opportunities for the two genders in education has not yet been reached. Therefore, the endeavors of the Ministry of Education and Culture as well of the National Machinery for Women's Rights are focused on continuing to promote this democratic goal, mainly with the National Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming.

The following recommendations are made with the objective to promote gender equality in education, training, science, and research. These include:

Women need to become more visible in school textbooks and activities. In particular, women's struggle should become part of the history curriculum and women's position in society should become part of the sociology curriculum. Role-play can be used to consolidate the need for shared household and childrearing responsibilities etc;

Students' choices need to be reconsidered. For instance, career advisors should encourage girls (and boys) to contemplate non-stereotypical fields of studies and later career prospects;

Sensitization through workshops and training is necessary not only for the teaching and administrative personnel, but also for the parents' associations and students' councils;

Supporting tertiary education institutions to promote gender research and gender studies is also essential. For example, the University of Cyprus has been endeavouring to create a gender studies program and other privately owned colleges, like Intercollege, have had a significant record of gender research to demonstrate;

Children need to become aware of success stories. Visits of role models in a number of sectors could be organized along with field trips. Such case studies can be discussed in class to trigger new ideas; and

High school children could test their entrepreneurial skills by undertaking certain projects as the running of the school canteen or could come up with ideas for business proposals feasible for a 'young entrepreneurs' day' at the end of each year.

4.3 Latvia

4.3.1 Introduction

Legal acts (Constitution, Act on Public Administration and Cabinet of Ministers) create the legal base for protection of basic human rights. Non-discrimination (as well on the grounds of sex) is one of the main human rights protected by the Constitution stipulating that people in Latvia are equal by the laws and court (article 91) and implemented without discrimination. Act on Public Administration establishes that it follows the human rights in its work. Direct tasks on implementing gender equality principles are set in the framework of documents of the Ministry of Welfare as the coordinating institution in this field. Direct task is mentioned as well at the State Labour Inspectorate establishing that it is the responsible institution for the implementation of legal work relations.

It is a positive trend that the documents determining the framework for work relations integrates EU legal norms, which guarantee equal rights and opportunities for pay, compensations, and work and it is established that an employee, which has faced gender discrimination, can apply to the court. The victim does not have to prove the gender discrimination fact by the defendant, however has to prove that the principle of equal attitude is not obeyed.

There is a positive impact from EU financing instruments (EU financed programs and initiative EQUAL). Objectives and tasks are set in the National development plan for 2004 – 2006 (Single Programming Documents and National Plan of Action for Employment). Legal framework acts of state employment agency lacks the tasks for implementing gender equality principles (except for the support for eliminating discrimination for persons after the leave for child care). This agency is responsible for monitoring the European Social fund projects, which means that it is involved in achieving the goals of gender equality policies.

To achieve the objectives of EU (greater progress in implementation of Lisbon strategy, to create new workplaces, to promote the progress of economies, and better competitiveness), major emphasis is for the need to develop attractive vocational training, as well as to create supportive environment for development of life-long learning. By defining the objectives in vocational education, EU agrees that considering the fact that the percentage of young people in labour market will decrease, there will be need for additional activities for the development of training policy, thus reaching higher standards in the education of youth and women⁶⁸.

In the Council Resolution of December 5, 1994 on the quality of vocational education and training the European Union Council emphasizes that all young women and men should have an opportunity to receive basic vocational education securing equal opportunities for both men and women upon completion of studies to seek a job. Such direct wording on equal opportunities is excluded from the legal documents of Ministry of Education and Science and its institutions.

Gender equality perspective is not stressed in the legal acts governing the education politics. For example, Paragraph 1 of Clause 2 of Law on Vocational Education (entered into law since 14.07.1999) stipulates that the task of the law is to ensure rights and opportunities to receive knowledge, skills, and professional qualification. This formulation does not stress gender perspective and does not request to ensure that upon completion of the studies men and women should have equal prerequisites in employment.

68 <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11030.htm>

Law on Education (entered into law since 01.06.1999) is a frame law containing definitions of all types and levels of education and laying down the general principles and competences of governing bodies - role of life-long learning should be stressed. Based on the principle of life-long learning, the state should guarantee access to education for all citizens in their living places – all ages, sexes, professions, and employment types. The citizens should receive education that ensures integration in labour market, active participation in civil society, and development of personality⁶⁹.

The Law on General Education (1999) establishes the functions and authority of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) – including responsibility for the content of general education and control of the methodological literature. In the situation analysis, courses of action, indicators and recommendations of the Education Development Concept 2002-2005, and gender differences are not taken into account. Thus, for instance, in the improvement of the education and continuing education system for pedagogues and in the context of the issue regarding continuation of the reform of payment to pedagogues and updating scientific and academic staff, these problems are completely ignored.

In the Single Programming Document the Objective 1 Program 2004-2006, outlining how the resources from the EU Structural Funds, available for Latvia, will be used during the period of 2004-2006, in the context of education development and analysis of the current situation, considers the gender aspect in some points (for example, the choice of fields of education having an impact on further segregation of labour market; the low proportion of women in scientific and technological disciplines). Unfortunately, the gender aspect is ignored in the identification of priority spheres.

Taking into account the relevant role of educational institutions, establishing the understanding of basic values, and behaviour models in the youth, the Ministry of Education and Science should guarantee an integration of gender equality principles in its politics. This point is integrated defining the sub objectives in the Program for Implementation of Gender Equality 2005 – 2006, assigning the resources for monitoring and researching the school text books and teacher training⁷⁰.

Sustainability and consequence of the activities could be ensured by assigning in the structures of the Ministry of Education and Science the staff members, which has a responsibility to integrate gender equality principles in the strategic documents created by the ministry, thus promoting the understanding of gender equality issues in the Ministry and in the educational system.

In the legal acts, strategic plans and framework documents reviewed, gender equality principles are not obeyed. EU legal norms are acquired, thus equal opportunities are guaranteed. To promote awareness of the society on relevance of gender equality issues and role thereof in the development of the society, as well as the human rights and possibilities to protect, strategic planning and linked documentation should put more stress on equal rights.

The work of National Gender Equality Council should be promoted by including representatives from the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs and Special Assignment Ministry for Social Integration, as well as increasing its role in solving gender equality issues. The decisions of the Council should not have solely consultative status but the decisions should also be legally binding - it should have a control function, thus implementation of the decisions would be more effective.

69 Communication from Commission. Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality

70 Programma dzimumu līdztiesības īstenošanai 2005. – 2006. gadam.

An effective information exchange location should be in place for all involved institutions in all cooperation levels (including inter-ministerial coordination group on gender equality issues, Gender Equality Issues, National Gender Equality Council), furthermore the cooperation should be increased among institutions involved in employment and education politics; employers and employees, in the process of preparation of strategic plans and organizing and implementing training. The information about the responsible person on gender equality issues should be accessible to all employees. In the Ministry of Education and Science only 8% are informed, comparing to Ministry of Welfare (22%), State Employment Agency (2%). The employees of the respective institutions should be aware of their rights to approach the representative who is responsible for gender equality issues to receive consultations and recommendations when needed or in case of discrepancies.

According to the data of surveys, only 34% of the ministry employees receive information from the legal acts. 84% of employees follow the information available from mass media, which often is subjective. Employees of the ministries should be informed and educated on strategic and planning documents.

Training should be provided for the officials of the respective institutions, especially from legal affairs and other officials who review legal acts from the perspective of gender equality. This should be done to elevate the awareness on gender equality and stress these issues by integrating in legal acts.

The guidelines, concept papers, laws and regulations, and documents for implementation gender equality in Latvia matching EU and international standards, understanding, knowledge, and implementation in practice is insufficient, therefore this has an impact on the overall work of the institutions in the field of gender equality. The attitudes of the officials should be changed towards gender equality issues by offering education opportunities and informative materials on gender equality aspects in the work of all institutions.

4.3.2 Structural Equality in the Education System

In terms of gender, education will be examined from the perspective of access and structural equality – that is, whether or not men and women have equal opportunities within the educational system – and also will look in terms of substance: Do schools and the materials they teach promote or hinder gender equality? Do educational programs reinforce or challenge stereotypes and obsolete gender roles?

In comparison to many other countries, the population of Latvia is very well-educated with a literacy rate of 99%. It can also be said that women and men in Latvia have relatively equal opportunities in reference to formal education: 50.5% of students enrolled in comprehensive schools were female – a percentage that has remained relatively unchanged since 1990. There are no formal or societal barriers that would place girls at a disadvantage to boys in respect to access to basic education, as it is a culturally accepted norm in Latvia that girls should receive the same amount of education as boys.

Professional education opportunities are equal for both men and women, also as confirmed by statistics presented in the following section.

In regards to higher education, the discrepancies between sexes are growing. Men seem to be at a more difficult situation than women when it comes to earning a university degree. This discrepancy needs to be further analyzed as in for example, how these differences impact opportunities for men and women. Considering the fact that women are disadvantaged both in the labour market and in terms of political representation on national level their better education does not seem to put them at any advantage. It is absolutely crucial that this inconsistency is examined more closely: if women are more educated than men why do they make less money and hold less prestigious jobs. The answer brings us to the hidden discrimination, stereotypes, and gender roles both in public and private sector.

We also have to consider what type of education men and women are receiving. It might be that women are not better equipped for a higher quality of employment although receiving higher education. In year 2004, women made up to 80% of students enrolled at the Latvian Academy of Culture, and 95% at the Riga Pedagogy and Education Management Institute – all sectors, in which professionals traditionally receive low wages and provide low social status in Latvia. Women made only 30% of the students enrolled at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga. A similar picture is reflected in enrolment at vocational schools where gender balance does not exist in any subject – all areas of study (with an exemption of agriculture) are either predominantly male or predominantly female, and some overwhelmingly so. Currently, the financing of the EU Structural Funds is directed towards engineering, but it should be ensured that the number of girls and boys choosing these studies is equal. There are no statistics that could provide information on whether this percentage reflects the fact that pre-existing cultural stereotypes are keeping men and women out of certain fields of study or whether these are free and informed choices of the students.

All professional and educational disciplines would benefit from a more equal gender balance if both men and women were equally represented. For example if this is done in the medical profession, the gendered aspects of medicine would be more likely to be addressed. Furthermore if more women studied economics, then women would be more likely to be employers and hold management positions.

There is a deficiency of preschool educational establishments in Latvia, especially for children from the age of a year and a half to 3 years. Investigations show that this is the deficiency of care institutions for children from the age of a year and a half to 3 years that prevents parents, most frequently mothers⁷¹, from returning to work after the leave for child care. The training of the unemployed in Latvia is financed from the state budget within the limits of the available financial resources. The process is coordinated and controlled by the State Employment Agency. During 2003, 32.8% men and 67.2% women were involved in the vocational training, re-qualification, and improvement of professional skills of the unemployed. Recent research in the municipalities of Latvia reveals that women are more eager to participate in these programs, therefore the question remains whether the state has performed detailed analysis from gender perspective and attracts and motivates men for more active participation. Unfortunately, it should be noted that the planning of re-qualification of the unemployed often does not decrease the existing segregation of professions.

NGOs do not see that the operational programs of EU Structural funds expand the accessibility of education, which would provide with a base for the adult education centres. No funds are assigned for the coordination of adult education network on national level. If left without funding, there is a risk to lose already established adult education system in the municipalities. Ministry of Education and Science is assured that Ministry of Economics, Ministry of

71 There are no precise statistical data in Latvia on utilizing the leave for child care by gender.

Welfare, and Ministry of Regional Development is responsible for implementing educational policy as well. The Ministry of Education and Science do not perceive the adult education centres as the main mediators; they are planning to invest in the development of colleagues as the providers for the second education.

An essential issue to ensure gender equality is educating also the employed professionals, in particular state administration civil servants and municipal staff. Though the offered course on the subject of gender equality is not very demanded, yet high and medium-level officials of some ministries play a significant role in the promotion of the state development. For example, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education and Science, have not attended this course. However, Ministry of Welfare should be supported in the development and offering of such a program on gender mainstreaming. Within the projects supported by EU, training manuals for trainers and civil servants have been developed. The aim of the course is to provide the civil servants responsible for implementing gender mainstreaming in respective policy fields with the knowledge and tools to work with gender mainstreaming projects. Unfortunately, the Program for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2005-2006 did not include the suggestion of non-governmental organizations and experts to declare the acquisition of the issues of gender equality as an obligatory requirement for the officials of state administration.

There is a need for more comprehensive analysis of the links between education and opportunities and how this affects both genders differently; several recommendations can already be made.

4.3.3 Promoting gender equality within educational programmes

The education system has a potentially important role to play in finding ways to address and eliminate gender inequality in society. The school environment can significantly impact the views and behaviours of children. If gender equality were to be reflected and promoted in teaching materials and classroom interactions, then a significant step would be taken towards addressing gender roles and stereotypes outside the classroom.

The guidelines issued by the Content and Examination centre of the Ministry of Education and Science in 1997 regarding teaching the social sciences, state that elementary school students should gain an understanding “what men and women, as well boys and girls, have in common and what how are they different; stereotypes and reality, distribution of jobs and profession; historical traditions and the present day”. The guidelines also state the classroom activities should reflect the following: cooperation, mutual assistance, guaranteeing, and demanding equal opportunities. These guidelines are a very significant step towards influencing what is being taught in classrooms, but also illustrating the political will of the government to take gender equality seriously.

Efforts should be concentrated to implement them, including monitoring and evaluation of the process. At the moment, there is a plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that the reality in classrooms still reflects gender bias and stereotype. For example, one researcher notes that when housework is discussed in classrooms children are still encouraged by teachers to assist their mother at home. Teachers impose these roles not only on the children they teach but on parents as well – teachers often speak only to mothers, sometimes to grandmothers, and rarely to fathers about child’s development. This is not just a message that women should be responsible for child upbringing but also may contribute to father’s sense of alienation.

Recent research shows that many teachers believe gender issues were an artificially created problem. Real change will take place only if training for teachers to become more sensitive on these issues is done. Time and significant investments from the schools and the Government should be considered.

The types of the subjects that schools offer also can contribute to a greater understanding of gender issues. During the Soviet period, family issues were a mandatory part of the education curriculum, this is no longer the case (whether or not this former subject addressed gender equality is not exactly a point, if it still existed it could be a forum for the gender issues today). While the current primary school curriculum contains a section on issues of civil society, gender is not discussed as an aspect of this although this presents one potential avenue for integrating the subject. Very few opportunities exist and even fewer options of where and how to discuss gender from within the curricula of primary and secondary schools.

University level education is more promising. Not only do university curricula offer more room for the discussion of diverse issues and topics, but instructors at this level are more specialized. There are two ways to potentially bring gender issues into university – either by integrating issues of gender into existing subjects, such as political science, sociology, philosophy, law, and others, or by offering specific classes on gender studies. Studying gender in university has a variety of effects: firstly, students themselves would become more exposed to the issues; secondly, gender issues would become more reflected in academic publications; thirdly, facilitated discussions between academia and communities would create a better understanding of the issues for the general public.

Gender equality issues in the educational standards, guidelines and curricula

Five subjects – history, geography, Latvian language, foreign language (English, German), Latvian language for minorities, were analysed paying particular attention to 20 standards. To detect whether the programmes address gender equality issues, samples of the subject detected were in depth analysed. The only document involving the requirements towards preschool kids resulted to be the Preschool education programme. The analysis of the high school elementary level was not performed as currently the ministry is reviewing the documents and the existing ones were produced 10 years ago. To get precise information, three interviews were conducted with the specialists of the Ministry of Education and Science – on the sports, history and geography curricula.

Systematic research on gender equality in the educational standards and curricula has not been performed. Only one laconic evaluation can be found at the report of the government for implementation of CEDAW convention where the evaluation of the education sphere is only one of the items. In this context 4 indicators were chosen⁷²:

1. whether the standard includes direct content themes and requirements and subject programmes – direct themes and tasks on equal opportunities/ gender inequality;
2. whether different requirements towards boys and girls are targeted;
3. requirements, themes and tasks where gender equality is indirectly underpinned;
4. the language of the documents evaluating whether it is containing the gender discriminatory terms.

⁷² Detailed description of the findings currently is available in Latvian; as the reviewed documents are in Latvian so at the current moment the conclusions are provided

In a subject curricula which came in force since September 1, 2005 gender issues resulted to be integrated. In the subject standards (history, geography, Latvian language, Latvian language and literature for the minorities, social sciences and foreign languages) requirements are found that could be interpreted in the context of gender equality. In the Sports curricula requirements are for boys and girls are different and separated. Specific themes and requirements for pupils are included in Social Science standards and program as well as in the Pre School education standards.

In the curricula there are ideas reflected for the teachers how to teach the themes on gender roles. The school text book analysis and interviews – in the newest text books material on gender equality is included. The standards do not include methodological guidelines for the teachers on how to guarantee the obtaining of the requirements. Practical support is minimal for preschool teachers and few school text books allows the wide space and room for teacher's subjective interpretation on gender issues. Teachers are not informed on gender issues and so their interpretation may include gender bias.

The language of the documents is correct and does not include gender discriminatory terms. Preschool chapter on the "Child development from 0 to 7 years" in separate phrases have the word "parents" replaced by "mommy". If it is informed choice then it could be interpreted as stereotypical assumption on the role of mother and irrelevance of father in child care.

School environment

In the website of the Ministry of Education and Science, information on the students in secondary schools is available also from a gender perspective. In 2004/ 2005, 50.15% of the pupils were girls:

- 1 – 4th grade - 47.86% girls
- 5 – 9th grade - 48.55% girls
- 10 – 12th grade - 58% girls

In 2004/ 2005, 88% of the teachers were females, forming a female dominated environment and very specific social networks.

Data from 15 school councils shows that 86% of councils were females. Data also suggests the school environment from various aspects is feminine. The question that arises is what is the impact of this present scenario on the educational process.

Domestic science has still a divided methodology, having different learning inputs for girls and for boys. Sessions are held for girls and boys separately. In the secondary schools, where there is the choice for the specialisation in Humanities and mathematics, pupils who choose humanities have limited opportunities to apply for exact sciences in higher education programmes. Women study much more social and humanistic sciences, while men study more natural sciences, technology, and engineering.

The attitude and behaviour of pedagogues already at elementary and secondary school is very important in this respect. Recent researches highlighted the perception and the understanding of pupils and teachers on gender issues

in education:

- Teachers believe that there are no differences in opportunities for girls and boys;
- Teachers and parents stress that men in the schools is few thus creating belief that child rearing is just women's task;
- Stereotypical attitudes – subjects are divided into masculine (physics, sports, IT) and feminine (literature, music, visual arts), school director should be a man and a head of the family – men (over 50% of respondents);
- 76 % of the teachers chose gender discriminatory definition of the gender equality and as well in the discussions expressed that there are strong feminine and masculine tasks and that there is a discrepancy between personal beliefs and their knowledge;
- As the school director majority of pupils and parents will see a man;
- Both parents and teachers recognize that few men are represented (school councils and meetings).

Teacher Education and Continuing Education

Situation in the higher education

In the upper secondary level 3 and 4, the percentage of women is 74.2, whilst it stands at 70% for the boys. In the tertiary, 5th and 6th level, 40.1% are women and only 27.9 is represented by boys.

The number of female lecturers at universities is higher than the one of males (female 54.7%, males 45.3%). However, among the professors the number of men is higher than the one represented by women. At the professor's council of Computer Sciences, Law, Academy of Marines there is no women representation. At the Council of Philosophy and Theology there are 2 women, at the united council of Daugavpils University there are also two women⁷³. Within the management of the Latvian Council of Sciences there are 8 persons, only one of which is a woman. At the expert group of Council, there is no female representation. From 25 members of the Council only 4 are women⁷⁴.

Teacher training and pedagogy and educational programmes are mostly female dominated with 82.2% of students who are women and only 17.8% are men.

In year 2002, the average salary in education was LVL 155 for women. Interestingly, men received LVL 168. It means that women are officially earning 7.7% less than men⁷⁵.

Six teacher education study programmes of the University of Latvia (including course descriptions) were analysed. The programmes were chosen according to the levels of school education:

- Pedagogy (bachelor)
- Preschool teacher
- Preschool education teacher
- Elementary school teacher
- Teacher for Social sciences
- Latvian language and literature teacher

73 www.aip.lv

74 www.lzp.lv

75 Central Statistic Bureau of Latvia

None of the A (compulsory study subjects) and B (compulsory electives) addressed properly equal opportunities between men and women, and none of the subjects had the term 'gender' in its name⁷⁶.

To investigate whether the study programmes included analysis of gender issues, an interview with Anna Kopelovica, Professor of the Department of Pedagogy from the University of Latvia was performed. She agreed that none of the subjects address properly gender issues, and she affirmed that there is no need for a specific course but "an integrated approach is needed" and a more comprehensive approach in order to permeate all interested fields with a gender perspective. Other university professors seem to support this approach⁷⁷.

In the Latvian universities there are no specific subjects on equal opportunities between men and women but all the interviewed stressed that these issues are covered indirectly in the study courses offered by the university. University of Latvia mentions study courses 'Psychology', Didactic, conflict management, Special pedagogy and The Children in Risk groups.

Anna Kopelovica also agreed that education on gender equality should be included in the teacher's training programmes "especially for teachers of social sciences: as an elective it could be integrated in the teacher training programmes in the universities."

Teacher training programmes does not have any reference to gender equality, Ausma Plavniece, Vice chair in teacher continuing education, at the Content and Examination Centre of Ministry of Education and Science confirmed this trend. But she did not see the value of designing a separate course as "the amount of the teacher training is already large". Target group could be multipliers for the teachers for them could a possibility to organize seminars, methodological recommendations could be prepared". The survey of the teachers reveals that only every fifth teacher have heard on gender equality in the university and study process, and only fourth (or only 24%) have heard on it attending courses, seminars, conferences. That means only 10 – 24% have received recently education on gender equality.

Conclusions

Courses related to gender equality does not feature directly in the Latvian universities. Moreover, training programmes for teachers do not include aspects related to gender equality. All the interviewees pointed out that there is a need to push forward the promotion of gender equality actions. On the other hand they also specified that there isn't a need to make a separate course study on this specific subject. This opinion is also supported by the teachers, interviewed on this matter.

Gender stereotypes in the school text books

Owing to initiatives of several countries and international organizations, already from the sixties in many countries research was commissioned to get general overview on gender stereotypes in the school text books, in children literature and in other sources that the youth encounters. The experience is different, the content, situations and stereotypes are set by the historical, cultural, political, economic, and social context. But the trends are similar – women and men have different status and position in the society, the impact of both genders is estimated differently. The first reaction of the publishers and the authors speaking on the gender stereotypes in the books is negative. Most of them believe that the books are gender neutral.

⁷⁶ More detailed analysis of study programmes currently is available in Latvian

⁷⁷ University of Rezekne

In Latvia, the first research was conducted in year 2002, the next – in year 2005. It is important to mention the recent research by the Latvian Centre for Ethnic and Cultural studies Diversity in the School text books, which was targeted to determine whether the school text books reflect multiethnic character of Latvian society and whether the principles of multiculturalism are integrated. These studies are the base for the recommendation for the teachers and authors and publishers of the book.

In a study commissioned by the Soros Foundation Latvia in year 2002, 50 school text books in Latvian language were analyzed. Results confirm that gender stereotypes are present in the teaching materials. Like elsewhere in the world, men are represented more than women and mentioned more in the texts. Men are associated with professional area but women with household; representation has gender stereotypes both in texts and pictures, strictly female and male jobs and professions. Women are teachers, men are managers and politicians. Women are responsible for the household tasks, child care, and laundry. Positive trend is that men are not only mentioned as responsible for the cattle, working in the garden but as well taking care of children and preparing meals. School books and programs consciously or unconsciously teach gender roles during the socializations process.

Representation of folklore and historical and cultural heritage in the school books was highlighted. It is not denying the role however if 1/3 of the books reflects the people in traditional costumes, question arises whether we are not romanticizing the old times. It is definitely a valuable material but it is also a base for patriarchal attitude system, which stresses the gender stereotypes and roles. This should be critically reviewed by adapting to the modern times.

In the study of year 2005, it was found that in the books published from 2002 to 2005 the trend is still kept to display gender roles but in some books a good practice can be observed.

Environment in the Ministry of Education and Science

The current Minister of Education and Science is a recognized and respected professor and an activist of women's human rights organizations and initiator of micro credits movement in rural areas of Latvia. She has expressed a strong support and a political will for paying particular attention to gender equality issues.

The gender ratio of the ministry staff was not available online.

Latvia has chosen gender mainstreaming approach to implement gender equality – that means that the employees involved in policy development should be competent in gender equality issues and integrate the principles in their everyday work. For example, using the statistics available on research, to estimate how the legal act will have an impact on the situation of women and men. Do the civil servants of the ministry have those skills? A survey was conducted. The servants are convinced that gender equality issues are topical in Latvia on national level; however it is at least importance in their institution. Education is the third field of importance mentioned by the respondents after the employment and family issues. 60% of the respondents chose the correct definition for gender equality. The situation is improving with attendance rates for the Public School of Administration, which provides training on gender mainstreaming.

Relatively often, the employees choose the option “Men and women contribute equally to the society but more attention should be paid to women issues for the fact that they are facing discrimination more”. This matches the observation that in Latvian society gender equality is more a women's issue.

Only the simplest cases of gender discrimination were recognized by the respondents. Most respondents pointed out that in “physics lessons girls do get easier tasks and questions than boys” (63 %).

Only 38 % of employees feel that they are informed about how to use the principles and integrate in everyday practice with a 52% at the Content and Examination centre. Only one third feels informed about Latvian political acts on gender equality and position. Even less individuals feel informed on European Union’s policy in gender equality.

The Centre employees mention the fact that in the schools boys are less trained in house keeping skills, which could later be important, to be perceived as discriminatory. Also, they are drawing attention to the school text books where the authors are producing the stereotypes mostly because of the lack of knowledge. A case was mentioned that for the promotion between men and women with a similar qualification an advantage was given to men. Some interviewees pointed out that in this ministry, the men receive better credits and more understanding if they have not completed a task.

74% of information on gender equality is received from mass media; legal acts, research, manuals or guidelines are searched by a half of the respondents.

The knowledge and skills of the institution is insufficient but self esteem is very high. The employees recognize the importance of the issues but do not link it to their everyday practice and institution. It is a positive sign that they show interest in issues and more often they are interested in “how to guarantee gender equality in everyday job tasks. Therefore training for the employees is an important step⁷⁸.

The Ministry of Education and Science is the leading state institution in education and science field, as well as in sports and state’s language politics. The ministry is responsible for implementation of the above mentioned politics. The ministry prepares educational curricula and standards and sets the requirements for the teacher’s education.

In Latvia, the education field is so-called ‘female field’ due to the fact that 81 % of employees are women⁷⁹. This situation itself shows imbalance, thus creating the effect that boys in the school accept the stereotype that the job of a teacher is a female profession and very few men make a choice of becoming teachers. In the academic year of 2004/2005 in high schools, only 12 % of teachers were men⁸⁰.

The reason for low male employment level in education field is low pay comparing to the private sector, as well the low prestige of teacher’s profession. The reason for gender segregation in teacher’s profession could be the gender imbalance in the subjects, for example domestic science traditionally is taught separately for girls and boys. Girls are encouraged to choose the subjects which lead them to acquiring the low paid and low prestige profession.

Ministry of Education and Science should pay attention to solving these issues in educational system. Special activities should be performed to promote acceptance of applicants from under-represented groups in the programs, which traditionally are feminine or masculine, for example, women in information technology programs and men in social work and teaching programs. A big role is played by the school teachers that the curricula should include the topics on promoting and implementing gender mainstreaming principles.

The employees of the Ministry (64%) point out that gender equality issues in education are not relevant, only 8 %agree

78 Gundega Rupenheite, Ministry of Welfare, Gender Equality Unit on the results of the survey in the ministries responsible for implementing gender equality and employment policies

79 Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003, www.csb.lv

80 Ministry of Education and Science.

to the relevance of the issue. 81% agree that in employment this issue is relevant. This gives us an idea that the employees of the ministry do not understand the importance of gender equality issue in education and the link between education and employment. The interest is low among the employees – less than a half (48%) indicate that they are interested in finding out how to implement the principles in their everyday work and duties, only 45% are interested in registering for the courses or seminars on gender issues.

Gender Equality Cases Solved by Institutions

The aim was to collect the cases that institutions have solved with the inhabitants or clients (not internally).

Only very few respondents/ministry officials have received information/knowledge on what is gender equality and what are the signs of discrimination (hidden discrimination) and it is possible that these cases are not recognized in the ministry. The results of employee survey revealed the following: only 60% of the employees of the Ministry of Education and Science precisely know the definition of gender equality.

In all institutions, 70% of the staff point out that they have not faced gender inequality cases while performing their job duties. In our eyes, this data supports assumption that employees do not possess the knowledge on gender inequality and discrimination.

The Ministry of Education and Science does not solve specific gender inequality cases that the employees are facing in the labour market however it strives to guarantee that gender equality principles are integrated in the development and implementation of political documents. Several cases were highlighted when respondents in a capacity of employees have faced such inequality. One female official, for example, has faced verbal harassment and this situation has not been solved.

In the interviews, majority of ministry employees indicate that the collective is dominated by women (as in majority of state institutions), men hold higher positions in comparison to women. Discrimination is observed in the job competitions – preference is for men for the higher positions. The management is more tolerant towards men when job duties are not fulfilled.

The employees of Content and Examination Centre of the Ministry of Education and Science stress that the lack of knowledge is observed more in the communication with the school teachers and less – internally in the institution. They point to some cases in their professional work. In one case when gender inequality was observed in the draft of school text book, they prepared recommendations for the authors of the book to review the content.

The motivation to attend the courses and seminars on gender equality issues is very low aiming at the officials of the Ministry of Education and Science – 10 – 25%. Staff members say that they have work overload therefore the courses should be made effective and these themes should be included in professional continuing education courses. A 2 to 3 hour long lecture would be most acceptable by the staff. The advantage of the courses on equal opportunities between men and women offered by State Administration School should be exploited. According to Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Welfare, negotiations have been initiated with the school on integration of gender equality issues in other training programs.

Informative Materials

As it is impossible to guarantee training for all employees, it is necessary to prepare and publish materials, short and concentrated texts focusing on what gender equality is and how to promote it internally in the institution and working with the society and how to recognize gender discrimination, including hidden discrimination as well. These materials should include very few pages (like a booklet or a fact sheet) as according to the surveys and researches, guidelines are not used or used very rarely. Tailored methodological materials should be prepared for the needs of each institution taking into account the specifics of each institution and including examples/cases. The material should be published for all employees and it should be user-friendly. The contact persons from Gender Equality Unit should be indicated so that people could address the contact persons for consultations (for example CD form).

Non-governmental organizations hold an opinion that the Ministry of Education and Science uses the gender mainstreaming approach in its work minimally to deal with the problem of gender equality. It should be noted that the MES is also very passive to take part in the execution of the Program for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2005-2006. Though the MES is responsible for the performance of several tasks specified in the program (for example, for the revision of the content of educational programs and teaching aids, including the issue of analyzing gender roles and stereotypes within, as well as for the inclusion of the issue of gender equality in the continuing educational programs for the improvement of professional skills of pedagogues), within six months from the approval of the program, the MES has not taken any determined action to perform the tasks of the program, but is waiting for the Ministry of Welfare (being the responsible institution for the policy of gender equality in Latvia) to take the initiative.

4.3.4 Gender Equality within National Decision-Making Process

Since the time of gaining independence, Latvia has not witnessed gender balanced participation in either Saeima (the Parliament) or at high levels of national government. In the Parliament since 1991, women have never held more than 17% of seats. Ironically, while the number is spread as achievement for gender equality, it only stressed by the reality of low level of female representation. Even within the civil service, where women outnumber men in total, high level management positions (state secretaries, department directors and their deputies) are overwhelmingly held by men. Attention should also be paid to the portfolios that women in positions of political power are responsible for. Is it a mere coincidence that since regaining the independence, Latvia has had only female minister of culture? This tells something about gender stereotypes and that the traditional role of women is often assumed as the keeper of national culture. The roles that women play in parliamentary commissions were examined in regard to those stereotypes.

Legal Anti-Discrimination Framework

Recognizing that gender equality is an inter-spherical issue that Latvia in the development of gender equality policy has applied for gender mainstreaming approach since the very beginning. The first strategic document in the field of gender equality policy was the Concept Paper on Gender Equality Implementation. The Concept Paper accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers on October 2001 is developed in close cooperation between governmental institutions, nongovernmental organizations, researchers, and branch experts. For the enforcement of gender mainstreaming, five main directions have been indicated: creation of national machinery; training and raising awareness in public administration among civil servants; improvement of the legislation; development of the Program for the Implementation of Gender Equality establishing quantitative and qualitative goals; regular monitoring and evaluation.

According to the International and European laws and regulations, which serve as a basis for the development of gender equality policy in all life spheres, gender equality is guaranteed in the legislation of Latvia. The most important laws containing new standards promoting gender equality came into effect during 2002: Labor Law and Law on Labor Protection. The standards of equal treatment for men and women are incorporated in these laws – equal pay, equal access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, parental leave, burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex and protection of pregnant workers. One of the recent changes to promote reconciliation of work and family life is the paid fatherhood benefit since 2004.

However, the transposition of legislation is not enough. An effective application of the gender equality standards prescribed in the legislation has become the main challenge now. Additionally, raising awareness of all involved parts about incorporated norms regarding equal treatment is of very high importance.

The Program for the Implementation of Gender Equality was elaborated and accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers on September 2004. The overall goal of the Program is to promote an efficient, integrated, and coordinated implementation of gender equality issues and develop sustainable institutional mechanism. Four main directions of actions have been identified: education at all levels and awareness raising in the society about gender equality issues; reconciliation of work and family life; improvement of the administrative capacity to work with gender equality issues and improvement of the gender equality policy mechanism; prevention of violence.

The recently established bodies in the Parliament of Latvia - Gender Equality Subcommittee of Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee and Women's Inter-parliamentary Cooperation Group have the potential to become important instruments to raise the political discussions from gender perspective in different policies (not only social policy).

The government of the Republic of Latvia signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the European Community and the Republic of Latvia on Latvia's participation in the Community Program relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality 2001-2005 on July 12, 2002. Within its scope, Latvia has gained the possibility to participate in different subprograms, in order to strengthen the capacity and efficiency of main groups interested and involved in the promotion of gender equality.

In order to uptake and realize resources of the European Union Structural Funds, the compliance to the gender equality principles was one of the interposed requirements. The main objective of these requirements is to establish equal rights to participate in initiation and implementation process of projects supported by EU Structural Funds for both – men and women.

The compliance of gender equality principle as one of the three horizontal priorities in up taking of Structural Fund resources has been defined by the European Commission. The Ministry of Welfare has developed Guidelines for compliance of gender equality principles for project applicants and evaluators of European Union Structural Funds that will help to grasp the gender equality issues, as well as design, implement, and evaluate the projects more successfully.

National Machinery for Gender Equality

In order to relay a consistent and credible message that the gender issues are being seriously addressed, it is critical that the government institutions strive for better gender equality within their own structures. This does not mean that more women need to be hired as many ministers are quick to point out that the gender ratios usually strongly favour women. However this does not mean that more women are working in the highest echelons of government nor that employment policies support and promote women's advancement or the creation of stronger families. In order to catalyze change in the society, government institutions must also lead by setting an example.

The first step of implementation of the institutional mechanism was the appointment of the responsible governmental institution for gender equality issues. Since 1999, the Ministry of Welfare is designated to be the responsible institution for the development of gender equality policy in the government and since February 2003 gender equality issues are the responsibility the Department of European and Legal Affairs, where Gender Equality Unit in July 2003 has been formed. The responsibilities of the ministry in the field of gender equality include the coordination of the implementation of the gender equality policy, monitoring and assessment of gender equality promotion programs and projects, monitoring the overall situation and the assessment of the political impact from the gender equality aspect, and ensuring the co-ordination of various laws and regulations.

Since the approval of the Concept Paper on Gender Equality Implementation in 2001, the network consisting of governmental and non-governmental institutions and research organizations has been set up. To ensure effective functioning of the institutional mechanism the distribution of possible tasks and responsibilities must be determined among all interested institutions – state administration, local governments, and non-governmental organizations.

According to the governmental decision the institutional mechanism to coordinate gender mainstreaming in the governmental bodies is set up consisting of Gender Equality Council and inter-ministerial working group. To ensure the implementation of gender equality issues at the highest level, the Gender Equality Council was established in 2002. The advisory council is established and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers and it has 12 representatives of the top level of public administration, non-governmental, and research institutions. The Gender Equality Council is an advisory body in gender issues for the government and has a strategic role to promote the implementation of the gender equality policy at all levels in public administration institutions and to draft recommendations about the necessary changes.

In December, 2001, an inter-ministerial work group was set up. There are representatives from line ministries, NGO's, Latvian Free Trade Union, and Latvian Employers Confederation. The work group has an important role in the development process of the Program for the Implementation of Gender Equality.

The National Human Rights Office monitors the compliance with norms in respect to gender equality and non-discrimination, provides consultations, recommendations on gender equality issues, reviews complaints on violations of gender equality, and represents the individuals in court.

State Labour Inspectorate enforces application and supervision of the labour and health legislation, and safety at work as well as equal treatment prescribed in the Labour Law.

Line ministries, as well as the Secretariats of Ministers for Special Assignments are responsible for the coordination of incorporating the gender equality principles into the already existing and future policies, laws and regulations and programs, preparation of proposals for the gender equality implementation, and information of the society about activities undertaken in the area of gender equality in accordance with their competence.

Women's Inter-parliamentary Cooperation Group was set up at the beginning of 2003. There are all the women parliamentarians involved in this group. The main idea for establishing such group was to highlight gender equality issue and to pay specific attention to the women's socio-economic situation and their role in society as a whole.

The recently established (September 2003) Gender Equality Subcommittee of Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the Latvian Parliament is responsible to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming on legislative level - prepare proposals for the parliament on legislative changes, raise discussions about gender equality, discrimination, gender mainstreaming, domestic violence, and human trafficking, and exchange the experience with other countries, as well as adopt the best practices.

The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia provides statistical data and analysis from gender perspective on ratios that are internationally comparative. It is planned to have more sex-disaggregated data in the future. The Latvian School of Public Administration involving local and foreign experts has developed training programs on gender equality issues.

Mass media, non-governmental organizations, experts and research institutions, which promote the public awareness about gender issues and the change of the gender roles and stereotypes, are an important partner for governmental institutions in the development of gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming. Therefore the educational activities must be provided for journalists, municipal servants and other interested persons to enable them to understand gender equality issues in their entirety and complexity – thus to provide comprehensive and objective information to the public.

However the capacity and awareness about gender equality issues among governmental specialists and other partners needs to be improved. The knowledge about implementation of gender mainstreaming on all policy levels and all spheres of life are short of and need to be provided with appropriate financial and human resources in order to raise the administrative capacity.

Such social partners as Federation of Free Trade Unions of Latvia and Latvian Confederation of Employers are regarded as important partners to provide with more equal situation in the economic sphere. The Union of Teachers is one of the strongest and it is currently working hard in order to raise the prestige of the teacher's profession in Latvian society and striving to increase the average salary for the workers in educational sector. In October 2005, the rally against Poverty was organized by Federation of Free Trade Unions of Latvia, and the Teacher's union was one of the most active. The threat of teacher's strike is still floating in the air but no specific steps of such form of demonstration can be executed.

Non-governmental Organizations

NGOs play a crucial role – they serve to monitor the actions and decisions by the state, fill in gaps in the state's activities where possible and necessary, and bolster sense of belonging and self-respect for individuals that actively take part in these organizations. They play also an important role in distribution of information and creation of social and professional networks, while also serving as training ground for variety of skills that can be transferred to other sectors.

There are very few NGOs in Latvia that are considered to address specifically gender issues. Recent survey reported that 15 – 20% of population is involved in some type of NGO, less than 0.2% belongs to a women's organization (which of course also automatically limits gender issues to women's issues). While not explicit in their attention to gender issues, some NGOs integrate these concerns into their objectives and activities (addressing human rights issues in general). Due to the fact that gender incorporates virtually all aspects of development, the attention to gender can be a part of most of NGOs activities. Proportion of NGOs addressing gender issues is considerably larger than those overly dealing with 'women's issues'.

NGOs that are currently working on gender issues specifically are active for the most part in providing specific services to women through mentoring, self-help groups, business support groups, crisis shelters, and women's clubs. There also are NGOs that proactively address issues of gender equality through advocacy, lobbying, and public awareness. Another welcome trend is establishment of men's groups.

Meaningful steps have been taken to address the issue of coordination and cooperation of NGOs; the organizations are united around common goals, women's organizations still need to increase efforts to transfer ideas about gender sensitivity to other parts of the sector. For example, organizations dealing with health care could greatly benefit from gender sensitivity seminars. Adult education organizations and trade unions would be improved by paying specific attention to gender issues.

By now, the state has relied heavily on NGOs for fulfilling various tasks. However trust and reliance on NGOs has not yet translated into commitment of resources by the state or in some cases, support and recognition of the important contributions and work of NGOs. NGO are insufficiently funded and are unable to fill all of the vital gaps in the state machinery.

NGO Coalition for Gender Equality in Latvia⁸¹ currently includes 75 organizations and individuals among its members, all representing a variety of backgrounds and interests – women's human rights, health promotion, adult education, trade union activities, academia, social policy, youth work, and journalism among others. The Coalition aims to develop a better understanding of gender equality in Latvia and to spread this understanding throughout the society in order to promote de jure or legal and de facto or practical gender equality in personal, professional, socio-economic, and political spheres of life. In year 2002, the trainer's pool on gender equality and gender-related topics was created.

NGO Resource Centre for Women "Marta"⁸² is targeted towards promoting the integration of unemployed and underemployed women into the society; to decrease the social tensions; to support and strengthen women's involvement in society and to facilitate the development and establishment of a network of women's organizations in

81 www.apvieniba.lv

82 www.marta.lv

Latvia, as well as to develop cooperation between women's organizations. The Resource centre for Women "Marta" is the secretariat for the national coordination of Latvian women's NGOs for the European Women's Lobby.

The goal of the NGO Lidere⁸³ (The Leader) is to promote mentoring in Latvia; support women entrepreneurs in the cities and rural areas of Latvia; increase presence of women in foundation of accomplished companies and in creation of new workplaces; provide free access to information and possibility to receive advice.

NGO Latvian Association for Adult Education - in Latvia, a strong network of adult trainers- multipliers have been established. Centres for adult education are located in five regions and in Riga: 21 centres in the regions and 5 in the big cities.

4.3.5 Data, Research on Gender, and Education

The Central Statistical Bureau is paying attention on collecting and providing gender segregated data sets on national level. Several private research groups also exist that have been commissioned to implement larger scale surveys and projects. While there is a continually developing capacity in Latvia to undertake such research, unfortunately the State does not always utilize this in commissioning research for various purposes.

It is strongly recommended that more attention be paid to gender desegregation in both collection and presentation of data in future.

While research specifically about gender provides information, other research in area lacks attention to gender.

Surveys

There is several research made on gender equality in the educational systems. There is one on gender roles in the Latvians school text books by the Coalition for Gender Equality in Latvia in year 2002, another one gender mainstreaming assessment in the municipalities in 2004 commissioned by UNDP Latvia and several policy analysis and new school text book survey commissioned by Ministry of Welfare in 2005.

In other research, government and NGO reports and publications, the situation in education is mentioned in some places at a larger extent, especially based on state statistics data.

Separate research on mainstreaming gender in the schools, teacher and pupils opinion or assessment of pedagogical process from gender or equal opportunities perspective, analysis of educational programmes was not found but there are new and promising projects and surveys in process.

83 www.lidere.lv

4.3.6 Recommendations

Recommendations and potential actions, proposed to be implemented within the Latvian context, are here presented:

- to include a course of study in the pedagogues' higher educational programs that would deal with the social aspects of gender differentiation: pedagogical, psychological and sociological, their causes and effects. This would raise the understanding and responsibility of pedagogues for lessening gender-typical behaviour and choice and promote more flexible and individual approach to a child or youth;
- to ensure proper execution of the activities and objectives included in the Program for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2005-2006 with regard to the development of an idea in compliance with the principle of gender equality concerning the roles of women and men at work and social life at all levels of the education system;
- to see whether the process of education ensures equal approach, attitude, and learning content to all individuals, irrespective of their gender. Secondary schools should provide general education and equal starting positions to all young people, as well as encourage the choice of gender-untypical fields of specialization, professions and further educational programs. This would decrease the segregation of labour market in future;
- to even up gender proportion in higher education and professorship by ensuring truly equal representation in academic and scientific advisory councils and structures of educational establishments;
- to promote determined matriculation of young people in gender-untypical courses of study. If there is a high level of gender segregation in specific curricula, particular measures should be taken in order to promote more balanced matriculation;
- to educate the staff of state administration and municipal institutions, notably the Ministry of Education and Science and the boards of education, in the issues of gender mainstreaming;
- to increase the salary for those working in the field of education in order to decrease gender segregation (for example, to allocate higher percentage of the GDP from the state budget to the education sector), improving, at the same time, the image of the profession. It is necessary to develop a national long-term strategy to level out the gender proportion of the working pedagogues.

To the Content and Examination centre of Ministry of Education and Science in the curricula

- to promote the authors and publishers of teaching and methodical literature in the subjects where standards include direct or indirect themes, requirements on gender equality;
- to pay attention to the sports course standards, to review whether there is a need for separate requirements for men and women. Perhaps a public survey would be needed, as well as the experience of other countries.
- to pay attention to the language of the standards and samples of the programmes.
- to review the criteria for evaluation in the school text books. In the process experts for different fields should be involved.
- according to the Content and Examination Centre the Legal Act for Acceptance of the School text books the publishing houses should perform new teaching tools approbation in the schools, this which means that there is a need for skilled experts and specialists. Seminars should be organized to train the teacher's skills and select school text books from gender perspective. These skills will be useful in the schools when choosing school text books for the school libraries.

To teacher educators, the authors

- informative and video-materials on gender equality in schools and society in general. For teachers, the study manner must be both active and interactive (seminars, discussions, plays, short courses, experience sharing)
- to integrate gender equality aspects in the multicultural contexts, cross-cultural training programmes and courses.
- Gender equality theme should be included in the professional programs and training courses for the literary and creative (redactors)
- informative materials on career choice for the pupils
- Teachers, education counsellors and career counsellors should be encouraged to promote the participation of young women and men in 'non-traditional' fields of study for their gender.

To NGOs – trade unions, unions of teachers

- To draw the government's attention to the long term strategy;
- The low salaries of women teachers have an impact to gender. As a result, women earn less and teacher profession has low prestige – the work of women is evaluated lower than men;
- For both genders it has been taught that child upbringing and education is the responsibility of women. Both at school and in family, children are always with women. Men are fragmentary participating in the life of children and teenagers; the next generation men are inheriting.
- Taking into account the feminine environment in Latvia, further research is needed on what happens with the boys, where and why they are disappearing from the high schools. In the further research, the school environment should also be analyzed.

4.3.7 Best practices

The Gender Studies Centre at the University of Latvia⁸⁴

Through enthusiasm and hard work of three women the Gender Studies centre was established in year 1998. Primarily financed by grants from international donors, the Centre offers courses to students and non-students in the community in various disciplines of gender studies and organizes events to promote debate. International Nordic Baltic conferences have been organized. The Centre has also published several books in cooperation with international partners.

While the University provides office space and classrooms, all activities of the Centre are financed from individual project funds (from organizations like Nordic Council of Ministers) although on the one hand the lack of university funding carries with a welcome freedom in terms of hiring lecturers and setting a curriculum, it also leaves the centre in a precarious balance: what happens when project funds run out?

As with any new initiative the Centre will have to prove its existence make a vital contribution both to the University and to society in generally. One way it is trying to do this is by attracting a diverse audience to classes and activities. Male students have attended every class to date and the emerging side of women's studies – masculinities – is also taken seriously. Guest lectures and international experts on male studies gave a series of lectures on this topic.

Another main objective is involving gender activists from NGOs and the wider community in both courses and conferences hosted by the Centre. As the director points out, these activists can often teach academia a lot more than

84 Gender and Human Development in Latvia, Astrida Neimanis, UNDP Latvia, Riga, 1999

academia can teach them. In this way, a necessary intersection of theory and practice emerges: the study of gender relations informs the way activities are implemented, and reality of gender relation in the society continues to remind academics that theories require practical application. She feels that more information about gender issues should be translated into Latvian and most importantly made accessible to everyone in society – not just academics in dusty library rooms. The centre can make an important contribution to the way in which gender relation are understood⁸⁵.

The Limbazi town – a pioneer in work with the kindergarten teachers

Iluta Lace started her initiative in year 2002 at the kinder garden of her daughter- Limbazi 1st preschool kindergarten and still continues it. During the interventions the teachers are trying to get answers to the questions:

- What is gender equality in the kindergarten?
- What is the situation in gender equality in my workplace?
- What could an ideal situation of gender equality in my kindergarten?
- What steps should be made to change the existing situation?

The base for the initiative was her observations for unequal attitude towards boys and girls and women and men in Latvian society. Being an activist in women's NGOs and gender expert Iluta based her methodological approach on Swedish education experts and methods for the teachers aiming to promote gender equality in the schools. Unequal attitude towards boys and girls is observed. Girls more often do receive compliments for their outer appearance that makes them to think that looking good is relevant to get the love from the others. Boys do get more evaluation on their work. This links to the choice of the profession as girls and boys receive different motivation.

Now the work is more focused on the first three questions. In the spring and autumn the teachers watched what kids are choosing to do in their spare time. Traditional situation was described – boys were playing with cars, girls with dolls, with a trend – the more elder the kids, the more the games were focused on the relation between the same sex kids. According to the teachers the boys chose the games strengthening the reaction, the skill to work in the team, plan, to get emotional freedom. Girls – to develop horizontal communication, social skills as well care for the others. It is not so that girls do not want to enter the boy's games. One girl told the teacher that she would love her father to buy the toy car but she has never showed her interest publicly in the kindergarten. Sometimes the boys reject the girls who would love to play with them. One girl won her rights to play with the force and demanding behaviour.

The observations are continuing, so the answers would be detailed and clarified. When the questions are answered what type of activities can minimize the gender stereotypic behaviour the next stage is the evaluation by the teachers what to do to enlarge the opportunities for the kids to play different roles and enhance the development of their potential. Iluta stressed that there is a need for gender equality consultants at the government level who could work with the schools helping them to analyze the situation and improve it⁸⁶.

Educational Materials for the Schools – Ministry of Welfare enriching the basket of tools

Three educational movies were made together with the manuals and distributed to all the school in Latvia. The movie "Let's do All we can do" (1 – 4 grade), "Think yourself" (5 – 8 grade) and "Be strong in your choice" (9 – 12 grade) promotes the discussion on gender roles and stereotypes the pupils are encountering in their everyday life situations.

⁸⁵ Communication with Elizabete Picukane, Irina Novikova

⁸⁶ Interview with Iluta Lace, Resource center for women "Marta"; The Public policy site www.politika.lv

For the youngest kids the documentary portrays the family and its everyday situation showing that the works and duties can be equally done by girls and boys as well that the most effective is when the whole family support each other.

Another documentary – the kids share their thoughts and feelings about the relationship between men and women and as well the role and impact of their peers on the decisions made. The film shows how the idea about masculinity and femininity plays a role in our choice of behavior and decision making. The documentary for the high school students focused on the rights of individual and opportunities to choose the profession matching their needs and talents. Among the ones sharing the experiences are female hockey trainer, film director female, musician who used to work as English language teacher, a pharmacist who says that there are no so much men nurses. So the youngsters are asked to follow the heart voice in making their future career plans not the stereotypes dominating in the society of female or male professions.

The activities are supported by the financial resources of European Social Fund “Building capacity in the institutions responsible for gender equality policy and employment”.

In the process there is a development of interactive game “Women and Men – what are we?” This game will allow each player to express the thoughts on gender roles and responsibilities and compare to the opinion of Latvian inhabitants on the legal norms. The game will allow looking to different situations from men’s or women’s perspective. The target audience is the high school pupils. The lecturer Kaspars Zalitis point “to promote the understanding of these issues in the youth means to make a safe future of the state based on equal opportunities”. In all Latvia in an attractive way we will discuss the wide range of issues of gender equality and inequality, Kaspars points.

NGOs representatives are welcoming the campaign activities and points that relevant funds have been invested in such type of project and sees the value added, yet are worried what will be the follow up when the EU funding stops as there are no relevant funds assigned⁸⁷.

NGOs: a watchdog

Resource centre for Women “Marta” while administrating the cooperation network of Latvian women’s organizations have established expert group on education within the frames of EQUAL project. Group is led by the associated Professor of Latvian Agriculture University Evija Caune. Latvia lacks targeted and long-term educational policy to guarantee equal opportunities for girls and boys de facto. Balance is needed at the educational institutions – teachers, administrative staff of the schools and universities, science and research, reveals Evija Caune.

A group of gender equality experts will participate at the working group of the Ministry of Education and Science preparing the Education Development Concept for year 2006 – 2009. Legal acts should promote gender equality de facto towards those they teach and teachers themselves, associated professor points.

Among the priorities is monitoring that the resources are distributed equally for both genders – in the science sectors, study sectors, vocational interest education. As well attention is not yet paid to the drop outs both girls and boys and second chance should be given to them.

87 Gender Equality Unit, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia; Communication Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia; Communication with the Ms Dita Luka, Parliamentary Secretary of Ministry of Welfare, Latvia by Anda Saka; February, 2006 , www.lm.gov.lv

Currently there are debates on structural funds – a representative of Coalition for Gender Equality in Latvia is a member of the Working Group on Structural funds at the Ministry of Finance so there is a hope that the documents will be reviewed from a gender perspective.

Although it is clear that no gender analysis or assessment will be made for this relevant document from the government's side.

Although it is an appraisable initiative, still the question remains what will be after the EU funds for EQUAL project be gone in two years, how to keep monitoring process, but currently there is an NGO watchdog not allowing the Ministry of Education of Science to fall asleep.

Reducing Causes of Professional Segregation

To give young people an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the technical industries, under the European Community EQUAL project “Reducing Causes of Professional Segregation” meetings were held between pupils and representatives of technical industries in five towns of Latvia. This project pays much attention to formation of career and education taking into account skills and talents of pupils, without any stereotypes that are popular in society regarding that, for instance, girls are more suitable for studying arts and boys should most preferably study sciences. The goal was to give pupils an overall idea of the progressive technical industries and to help pupils in choosing their future professions. The experts gave an insight into technical industries, companies and professions, as well as initiated a wider discussion with pupils on their possible career choice in IT, engineering, electronics and other progressive industries.

In June, 55 pupils had the opportunity to have internships in companies of technical industries. Girls and boys from Ventspils were able to familiarise themselves with the structure of the company “Ventspils Digitālāis centrs” (Ventspils Digital Centre) and with the duties and the everyday work of the specialists working there, thus being able to evaluate their suitability for jobs in technical industries. The objective of the internship was to give pupils an insight into jobs in companies of technical industries, as well as the working life on the whole. The experts of the Professional Career Counselling State Agency developed internship diaries, specially made for these pupil internships. The production of the diaries was based on the experience and knowledge of their project partners in Great Britain. These diaries can contain very detailed information, which has enhanced acquisition of more substantial and diversified knowledge of specific professions, companies and industries, as well as working environment and working life on the whole.

The pupils admitted that their summer week of internship had been valuable. During the week they had improved their skills, got to know much new information in spheres they had not known before, as well as tried out their skills by fulfilling small technical works and duties. The pupils were of the opinion that the enthusiasm of internship supervisors played an important role as their supervisors succeeded in arousing their interest and letting them conclude that a job in metalworking industry, for instance, is equally suitable for men and women.

The aim of implementing the EQUAL project “Reducing Causes of Professional Segregation”, which has involved a total of 20 co-operation partners (higher educational institutions, nongovernmental organisations, public authorities, local authorities, adult education centres and owners of private business), is to reduce causes of professional segregation⁸⁸.

88 <http://equal.lsif.lv>

5.0 Recommendations and conclusions

The results from the research analyses carried out in Malta, Cyprus and Latvia, presented in the previous chapter, clearly show that progress has been made in the past decades towards a more gender balanced society. Yet, although this appears to be a major achievement, different and new forms of gender imbalances have emerged, particularly within education systems. This is especially true if we consider the statistics presented, which show strong differences between males and females in the choice of specific credits, the presence (or absence) in high management roles and, ultimately, in clear stereotypes that still influence choices of job careers.

Based on the research carried out in this report, some conclusions and recommendations in order to tackle the problem of gender inequalities and gender stereotypes in education are presented.

There are three **key observations** that emerge from the study:

The **first** is that although women are more likely to further their studies than previously, a closer look at the education systems in Malta, Cyprus and Latvia shows that women are not always equally represented in the various faculties and institutes making up the post-secondary, vocational and tertiary education. Women are still holding on to the traditional 'caring' fields, such as teaching and nursing and avoiding Maths, Science and Technology (MST). Moreover, one of the major concerns related to the feminization of the teaching profession is the lack of male role models for children attending primary and kindergarten schools, which evidently reiterates the problem enrolment in this area. One possible reason for this tendency is that women's choices are often based on a realistic appraisal of their chances for employment. Moreover, women's choices are also influenced by their chances of combining work and family life. Family and home responsibilities are still sometimes perceived as female tasks. Findings from a detailed analysis of existing literature, also supported by statistics, show that a considerable number of countries have few, if any special measures in place to redress gender imbalance in MST subjects. In some countries, this was because gender imbalance in the area of MST was not perceived to be a problem, which makes the problem of job opportunities driven by stereotypes even more evident.

The **second** point is that whilst the majority of the teachers are females, management and decision making roles, appear to be of a male dominance. Although statistical data revealed an increase of women occupying decision-making positions in schools, it was noted that as the level of education increases, women's participation in such positions still tends to decrease.

The **third** point relates to the actual material used in education and the language in relation to sexes and identities. Textbooks play a very important part in gender equality. In fact, textbooks can hinder equal opportunities to both sexes if they are gender biased. Gender bias can also be taught 'implicitly' through the language and pictures used in books. To avoid rigidity in sex identity or sex roles, teachers need to choose language (nouns, pronouns and adjectives) that specifically describe the particular person, or use gender neutral language when speaking generically. Sensitivity to gender biased language in educational setting is substantially important as gender roles and stereotypes are also transmitted through language use.

Various recommendations have been highlighted to in the research. The following are re-iterated for ease of reference:

1. The objective to increase the share of female graduates in MST should play a more prominent role in European and National policies.
2. More efforts should be made by all educational systems to motivate female students to opt for scientific/technological subjects in primary, and secondary schools as well as in higher education.
3. Textbooks and assistance/counselling when the choice of credits are being undertaken are key issues to be addressed at National and European level.
4. It would also prove beneficial if career guidance is offered at an earlier stage, even at primary school level, to help the younger students become better aware of gender stereotypes and to ultimately be able to make informed choices.
5. To increase the number of female workers who occupy decision roles within education institutions.
6. Use of gender neutral material and higher attention to the language used should receive stronger importance with in education practices.
7. Revisions and updating of school textbooks is highly recommended as one of the actions that might play a central role in reducing and ultimately eliminating gender stereotypes and gender imbalances.
8. Public initiatives, such as publicity campaign and focused counselling, need to be undertaken to encourage more males to enrol for education courses.

At both the national and European level, polices should address the problem represented by gender stereotypes and imbalances in the education system more profoundly. Implementing the already existing policies on gender mainstreaming but also developing new actions and promoting new programmes that might enhance the growing list of best practices, should be the main driving force.

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Appendix A: E-forum questions

Issue A: Role of the family

Various studies concerned with access to education and gender inequality have been published by International Organizations including the International Labour Organisation, UNICEF, UNESCO. In the majority of cases, however, they deal with developing countries and the problem faced by young generations and their families in reaching adequate standards of education - mainly because of the economic conditions that these countries face and the pressure on children to work. One of the issues emerging from the studies is that families tend to have a role in influencing the children in their choices for school enrolment.

Q1. In Malta, does the family have a role in influencing children's choices for school enrolment? If yes how?

Issue B: Multiculturalism

European countries are progressively facing the challenge of multiculturalism, particularly the integration of different religious and cultural practices within schools.

Q2. Are different religious and cultural practices influencing education policies in your respective country? If yes how?

Q3. Do different religions and cultural practices influence gender issues and policies in Malta? If yes how?

Issue C: Student drop out rates

As the ILO pointed out, in the more economically developed countries of the OECD, there is a trend toward a growing discrepancy of male and female students enrolling at secondary levels and higher levels. This discrepancy is augmented at higher levels, including university. Statistics show that more female than male students are furthering their studies. Moreover, statistics show that there are higher numbers of female graduates. On the other hand, there is a higher drop-out rate of male students at secondary level.

Q4: What are your views on this phenomenon?

Q5: Is this trend being given adequate consideration in education policies and tools in Malta? If yes how?

Q6: Are separate girls and boys schools still present in Malta? Or does co-coeducation exist? If coeducation exists what have been its outcomes?

Issue D: Societal influences: Gender roles and stereotypes

Although at age 16, girls are currently achieving better academic results than boys, relatively few young women are choosing science or science-related subjects for further study. In fact, at A Level boys dominate in maths, science and technology (MST) subjects, and far more men than women are taking up MST studies in higher education. This has significant implications for men's and women's career choices and future earnings. Research shows that students' subject and course choices are influenced by a range of factors including their own views and expectations, those of their peers, parents and teachers, and the media

Q7: To what extent does the students' choice of subjects reflect gender stereotypes?

Q8: What are the major factors that are influencing students' choice of subjects?



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