



EI Women's Conference, January 2011, Workshop:

Gender Equity in Employment in Education and Research

Jeannie Rea, President, National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), Australia

Key questions

1. Do women in the education and research professions have equal pay and conditions with men?
2. To what extent have women in the education and research professions achieved equality with men in advancing their careers?
3. What barriers remain despite legal equality, (where it exists)?
4. What role do our unions have in improving gender equity in employment for women?

Desired Outcomes of workshop

- Increased knowledge of the issues across sectors, countries and unions.
- Increased capacity to campaign on gender employment equity issues.
- Network to exchange experiences to strengthen campaign in and through our unions.

Backgrounder

- Gender equity in employment is about the whole career - from training and recruitment, to advancement and promotion, and to retirement and pension.
- Women cumulate gender disadvantage at each stage, leaving most women poorer and less secure at the end of a long education career.
- This applies to all education industry careers, including early childhood educators, primary and secondary teachers, technical and further education teachers, academics and researchers, as well as education professionals in administrative, technical and professional jobs.
- However, due to the campaigning by women through their unions and the women's movement, women in education, particularly school teachers, are usually the women workers who pioneer many advances in gender employment equity.
- The bias against women's gender equity increases with the level of education and required qualifications. Therefore, women are particularly discriminated against in research careers, even in most OECD countries.
- The more feminised education jobs are, the lower the status and remuneration – hence the low status of early childhood education.
- The more male dominated, the better the status and remuneration – such as for lead scientific researchers and university vice chancellors/presidents.
- Jobs in teaching and research require tertiary qualifications, so the access and success of girls through school and university are directly related to the status of the education profession.
- Gender segregation of labour entrenches discrimination from subject choice at school through university to choice of specialisation in education, professions and research.



- However, even where girls and women are achieving qualifications, men are more likely to gain employment using their qualifications in more prestigious education positions in senior administration, research and management.
- Women remain excluded from male strongholds through male preference to continue working with men. Men are deterred from entering strongly feminised fields.
- Women are still judged as risky propositions for senior positions because of gendered assumptions.
- Women are often reluctant to join the masculine cultures of predominantly male work environments and practices.
- Equal pay for equal work is the law in most countries, but even where this exists the gender pay gap persists and is widening again.
- While individual women and men may get the same rate, when viewed collectively over the profession, women lag behind and the gap widens with length of service and longevity.
- Gender inequity is experienced differently for women of different cultures, ages, abilities and other aspects of identity. These can be hidden if not recognised and explicitly addressed.
- It often seems that women still have to work twice as hard for half the recognition.
- Balancing work and family is more difficult for women even with supportive practices. Their family and carer roles are judged more harshly. Women are seen to be lacking in their role as mothers and carers and/or as education professionals. Men are not judged at work on their capability as fathers and husbands;

Women start to lose ground from:

- access to school and university;
- qualifications on entry;
- insecure jobs on entry and throughout career(contract and casual);
- overlooked, ineligible or discouraged from career advancing activities;
- fewer opportunities for increasing qualifications;
- fewer opportunities for promotion;
- interrupted service (usually due to maternity and carer roles);
- part time employment;
- entrenched gender segregation of division of labour;
- systemic gender based discrimination;
- culturally based gender discrimination;
- discouragement to continue career;
- sexual harassment and gender based violence;
- discriminatory retirement and pension schemes.

Addressing gender inequity in employment is multifaceted and covers many areas of direct and indirect discrimination.

Gender discrimination can be addressed through:

- equal pay for equal work;
- job security;
- paid parental leave;



- schemes to provide opportunities for advancement including professional development, mentoring and access to 'acting' positions;
- equity in access to PPL, advancement and promotion for part-time, casual and contract workers;
- access to further study to increase qualifications without loss of pay or service;
- affirmative action and positive discrimination for women in recruitment and promotion, e.g. quotas in recruitment, gender balance on selections panels;
- actions that increase safety for women in travelling to and at work and in accommodation;
- gender awareness education for men and women about the harmful impacts of gender discrimination;
- inclusion of women of minority groups in all schemes ;
- equity in retirement and pension incomes that do not discriminate on gender caused differentials in service.

Our unions

Most of EI affiliates have a majority female membership.

Many of our unions have women leaders at every level.

Our unions have made significant impacts in addressing gender equity in employment in education – and more broadly - often through pioneering campaigns.

Achievements by unions have included:

- gender equality in pay and conditions;
- removal of discriminatory clauses for married women;
- affirmative action and positive discrimination policies and schemes;
- campaigns against violence and for safety;
- women's committees and conferences and union training;
- designated women's positions in structures and in representation;
- included gender issues amongst key negotiating issues in collective bargaining and other campaigns;
- continually educate the membership on gender based discrimination;

Where are we now?

A number of EI affiliates have been reporting that gender equity in employment in education seems to be at a standstill – or declining following significant advances over the past few decades..

In Australia, the NTEU, along with our sister teacher unions, have been pioneers in achieving many aspects in gender equity in employment.

These have included equal pay for equal work, paid parental leave; family friendly policies; prevention and redress of violence, harassment and discrimination; affirmative action in recruitment, advancement and promotion; and the removal of gender related discrimination



in pension schemes. However, the NTEU has found that systematic and systemic gender based discrimination is still happening – and gaps are again widening..

In Australia, overall women's workforce participation rate has increased from 43.5 per cent in 1978 to 58.4 per cent in June 2010. However, women are still much less likely to work full-time than men (54.3 per cent compared to 83.4 per cent), and 69.6 per cent of all Australians working part-time work were women. Australia women's workforce participation remains low by international standards. According to the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2009*, Australia was ranked 50th internationally in regard to women's labour force participation relative to men's. Employment across Australia continues to be marked by ongoing gender inequalities. Whilst women have increased their participation in employment, the gender pay gap and significant patterns of sex segregation remain. Changes in organisational policies and practices appear to reinforce this, indicating that existing equity policies and practices have been inadequate.

Gender Equity and Employment Project

In order to understand these issues better, the NTEU has partnered with *Unisuper* (superannuation fund) and Universities Australia Executive Women in a project to investigate these practices in the university sector. The ARC (Australian Research Council) funded project is examining the changes over the last fifteen years with a focus on recruitment, promotion and career progression.

The particular focus is upon contrasting pressures from entrepreneurial developments and advances in equity policies. The objective is to provide new evidence of the ways gender inequalities are reproduced and to inform strategies to promote gender equality. The project has a number of components, including reprising our 1996 survey on gender and employment equity in Australian universities. Other parts of the project will explore how **parental leave, classifications and promotions policies impact upon women's participation and career progression**. Another focus is upon senior women concentrating upon the organisational issues that inhibit women's careers.

A particularly important part of the research is on casual staff. The numbers of casual staff in general positions, but particularly in research and teaching have exploded over the past decade. **Casualisation** is a major issue in Australian universities and technical colleges as despite massive expansion in enrolments there has been a continual decline in government funding since the 1990s. Funding shortfalls have led increased employment of casual workers rather than adequately plan for workforce increase and replacement. By 2009, casual staff had increased to about 20% of university staff which equates to a 160% increase in ten years. However there is also a sizable gender divide with 15% of male academics being casually employed, compared to 26% of women academic staff. (*Frontline*, NTEU, Vol 18, Sept 2010).

The NTEU as a union representing academic and research workers is particularly aware of the importance of rigorous research to provide the evidence to support our union claims for gender equality for women and girls. Gaining funding for research on gender and women has become more difficult in many countries as the focus is again on men and the assumption is that women have either had enough attention or have achieved their demands for gender equality.