Gender equality education: The Importancs, results and barriers

• The Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre

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#### How it all started

- 2006 I start teaching in upper secondary school (<u>www.bhs.is</u>)
- Newly graduated as a teacher
- Active feminist
- Knew the national equality law states that all school levels shall teach equality – none did systematically
- First an optional course
- Now compulsory
- In national curriculum for all school levels equality is a basic element



68 LEIKÁRIÐ KYNNT 70

 Students working on the nobel prize winner (1955)
 Laxness



Morgunblaði

#### ndur gæða glæsibifreið Nóbelskáldsins nýju lí

misseri hafa nemendur Borgarunnið hörðum höndu:: ១០ ខ្ទិស: សៅ Jagúar-bifreið Halldórs Laxness eftir að bifreiðin kunna, sem lengi heilsaði gustsmað Gljúfrasteini, var flutt til skólans til viðgerðar. Á myndinni sjást Elma Björnsdóttir, Sylvía Karen Ragnarsdo Eva Hilmarsdóttir og Stefán Á nemendur í bílamálun, standso

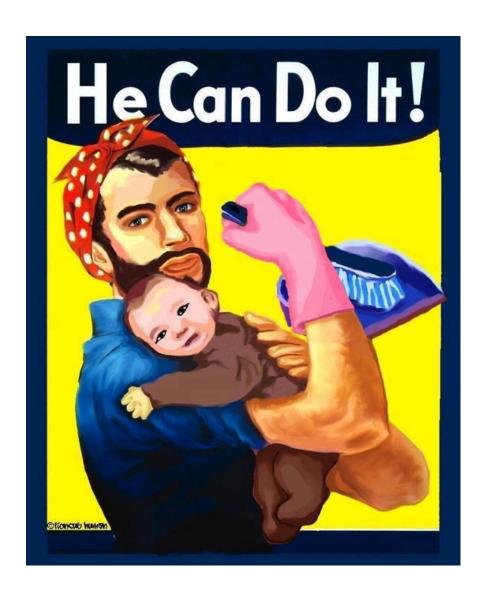












#### Barriers

- Gender equality faces restistance in general
- Some fellow teachers are a little sexist
   some a lot
- All teachers must be gender educated
   are not
- Backlash: The trans- and sexeducation



#### Barriers

- The inequality is moulded into the culture – we need to respond and deconstruct
- Everybody has an opinion on the matter
  - few have knowledge



### What needs to be done

- Gender equality and inclusion in the curriculum
- Teachers training diffrent pedagogy
- All school levels
- Textbooks teaching material
- Gender mainstreaming in school's
   students social life

### Challenges in the classroom

- Students prejudice towards feminism and think they want a woman privilege more than equal rights
- Students think that equality is already here
- Students completely accustumed to the pornification and traditional steriotypes – normalized
- Girls are sexist too— are codependent to the masculinity "we want this to be like that"



#### Challenges in the classroom

- The students don't realize the connection on cause and consequence, e.g. the pornification in popculture and increase in beauty surgery
- Students look at gender issues as an individual thing - "many women are violent" or "some women are in charge in the home"
- Misconception ,,women just don't apply"
- Privilege blindness

## Important background in teaching equality

- Awakening
- Adress the students through their feelings, experience and attitude
- Participation and activity
- Democratic framing the students take part in organizing
- Students feel that they "own" a part of the course



#### Important background in teaching equality

- The term Power is a key issue and put it in perspective
- Discuss other marginalizsed groups
- Beiing able to be vulnerable and honest
- Be bold talk about challenging and intense issues

### Gender equality education is also about

- Empowerment
- Communication
- Expression
- Arguing
- Empathy
- civil consciousness
- Activism
- Solidarity
- Broadmindness
- Toleration
- Self-understandig
- Lifeskill education

### Why...?

- Personal happiness: All genders are suffering
- Society's healthiness: We are not using every individual's possibilitis
- An Icelandic study shows that students are more negative towards gender equality now than 20 years ago.
- Student (most of them) thirst for this kind of education



### My guiding lights in the classroom



- Diversity and fun
- Closeness with the reality of the students
- All the issues of inequality are discussed
- Training in critisism and "reading" the society
- The boys do not feel themselves as the criminal or the bad guy and the girls do not consider themselves as the victim.
- The culture is to blame
- Empowerment and responsibility

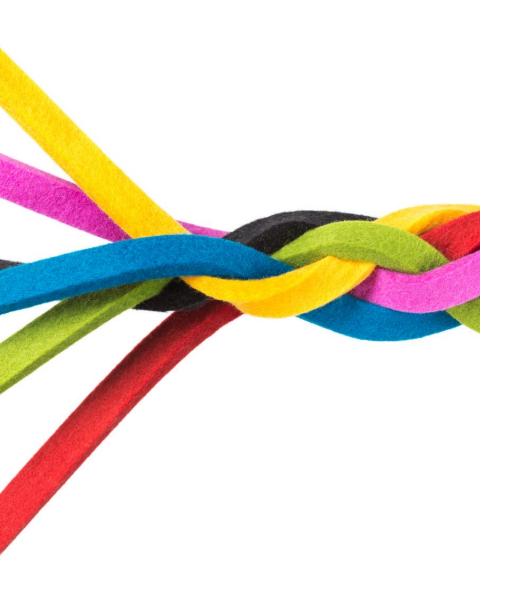
### What and how do I do it?

- Essentialism vs social construction (born or not born with gender role)
- Start with the closest surroundings of the student and carry on to the international community
- School and the social life
- The home
- The workplace
- The media
- Politics
- World issues

### What and how do I do it?

- Manifestation of the inequality viewed:
- Headcounting (democratic demand), prostitution, domestic violence, rapes, misogyny, fashion, tv shows, wagegap, trafficking, apperance, beautysurgeries, pornification, porn, socialisation, the price of masculinity

   and so on
- My students "infect" other students of the wisdom ©



### What and how do I do it?

- The Culture plays a key role is all around, moulding us – without critisism
- Cause and effect connected
- Flow of discussion and thoughts – concepts defined and put in contest



### What do students do?

- - Do team building excerxes
- - Do diffrent projects
- Share stuff in the classroom like articles, ads, books, movies, music videos, stories about themselves and others
- raise questions
- - Open up and discuss issues
- - Disput
- Take a concept test and an oral one too

#### What has been succeeded

- Taught in almost every upper secondary school in Iceland
- Feminist clubs in upper secondary school's
- their manifesto is that gender studies will be obligatory
- The course has colored the school culture
- Also taught in some elementary school's
   madatory and not
- Many defined actions have been taken Facebook/social media activism
- General discussun in the community





### Impact

- Vocational teachers say that the culture in the workshop has changed – not sure why...
- Vice principal: The course has had tremendous effect on the school – decisions, processes, prevention work,
- Borgarholtsskóli is a role model according to the school's principal





#### Next steps

- Educate and coach teachers and everybody who work with children and youth
- Direct and indirect (the hidden curriculum) equality education
- All school levels
- Educate parents
- Make it unnessesary

### What is all this about?

- Not just about feminism
- Not just about beeing a teacher
- But about the role of the educational system
- About democracy
- About justice for all





### Biggest victory

- Gender studies is madatory in all departments in Borgarholtsskóli!
- It did not occur to itself ©



# Bad things happen when good people do nothing - Edmund Burke