

MANAGING DIVERSITY OR MANAGING FOR DIVERSITY

in the corporate university

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This paper considers the ways in which gender equity work and gender equity workers have been repositioned in the context of the post modern restructured university. The paper draws from a larger ARC study of women and educational leadership in an era of restructuring from 1996-8. In this study, we explored how women leaders dealt with educational change across three education sectors- universities, TAFE and schools. It became apparent that there were common themes across all sectors. First, an increased emphasis on outcomes and image, on efficiency as the bottom line, best encapsulated in the notion of performativity (Lyotard 1994, Blackmore , Ball 1999). We have argued elsewhere that performativity is as much about being seen to do something-- measured by performance indicators upwards to central management and/or outward in customer satisfaction in terms of being able to achieve market appeal. These two modes of accountability, we found were seen to distract and detract from the core work of teaching, researching and leading. A second theme was that there was a dissonance between the values that many of the women we interviewed espoused about education and social justice and the types of practices expected of them in a performative educational institution. Our study indicated the importance of the cultural rather than structural aspects of restructuring, and how there was a distinct value shift brought about in restructured schools, universities and TAFE colleges which changed the relationship of teachers, academics and trainers to their intellectual work. This dissonance led to considerable emotional turmoil-emotions ranging from anger, frustration, despair and fear to those of excitement, and enthusiasm, although more on the down than the up side. This dissonance arose from the sense expressed by most that education and educational practice was more than a 'service' or a 'good' to be sold, in which students themselves became the 'product' and industry sthe 'user' or 'client'. It derived from the view that education had a wider responsibility to the individual and community than merely imparting skills for work, and that this element was no longer evident in current discourses around educational change.

We argued elsewhere that while education has been informed by private sector practice, first that the type of 'hybrid' managerialism that has been taken up and practised is not 'best practice'; as espoused by management theory, but rather a form of managerialism that reinvents old forms of bureaucratic hierarchy and models of masculinity linked to.'out of date' views of leadership and management. We also suggest that in terms of the move to corporatise education as other aspects of social life, that educational organisations have a different set of responsibilities, different market structures and different relationships with

their 'clients' than private sector organisations. That is, schools universities and TAFE organisations have a responsibility to wider communities, to society more generally. Indeed, we would suggest that it would be preferable for society more generally that there was greater corporate citizenship exercised by the private sector modelled on the types of social responsibilities espoused in education.

Gender equity in the performative university: does it matter anymore?

The 1990s has witnessed a radical restructuring of relations between individuals and the state produced by successively more conservative governments as education has been increasingly seen as a positional good, a commodity, and or industry (Marginson 1997, Peters 1997). It has been a period marked by a form of backlash politics arising from the conjuncture of contingent discourses about privatisation, marketisation, managerialisation and commodification. This has reframed and set the terms of how women academics teach, research and lead. Furthermore, it has shaped how equity workers develop and deliver equity policies and how they strategically deal with inequality in the academy.

This situation follows from the Federal Labor Government's restructuring of the higher education sector after 1987. Then the espoused aim to promote a national unified system, thereby improving access and equity through the development of a mass tertiary education sector. Until the late 1980s, Labor had at least rhetorically sought to balance equity issues against those of efficiency and effectiveness. At this time Australia stood out as an example of a strategic but contested alliance between the women's movements and the state, achieved primarily through the positioning of feminist bureaucrats or femocrats to work for women from within the state via an institutionalised legislative and policy machinery eg. Women's Advisors, dedicated Equal Opportunity (EO) units (Hancock 1999).

Femocrats within the state and the unions, under the corporatism of Labor, saw award restructuring in the move to a decentralised industrial relations system as providing a 'dangerous opportunity' in which women could gain redefinitions of skill and career which were more inclusive of women's skills and career paths (Van Gramberg 1999). Many feminist trade unionists were reluctant to go down the structural adjustment and enterprise bargaining track because they were aware of the need for strong top down equity policies to reinforce bottom up equity policy activism (Sawer 1994, Yeatman 1998). Furthermore, the Affirmative Action Agency warned of the dangers of restructuring which did not have equity as a central organising principle (Davies and Pratt 1999). However there was a general lack of political will reflected in the institutional responses which tended to weaken the capacity of pressure to make equity more embedded in the actual processes of restructuring after 1989. The substantive issues, practices and policies of EO had not been firmly implanted into the structures, processes and mindsets of managers and practitioners on the ground, and were still seen to be an imposition, an afterthought, rather than central to management practice or good leadership. It was for this reason that the devolutionary model of educational governance which was central to restructuring was seen to be premature by many feminist activists within the academy and education bureaucracy more generally because there was neither ownership or commitment by local managers.

With the shift to the neo- conservative social policies and radical liberal market policies of the entrepreneurial Howard government the capacity of feminists to work within and through the state has been severely curtailed. There have been a number of ideologies underpinning the neo conservative attack on gender equity principles and reform since 1996. One has been an attack on claims upon the state by special interests which had been central to the responsiveness of the Labor corporatist state. Women (or any other interest group) should not, it has been argued, even by the Women's Advisor to Howard, Prue Goward, get special treatment which would not benefit everyone. Thus the federal review of the Affirmative

Action Agency by the Howard government was framed by the term of reference that 'legislation would be retained only if the benefits to the community as a whole outweigh its costs; and if the objectives of the legislation/regulation cannot be achieved more efficiently through other means, including non-legislative approaches' (Quoted in Bacchi, 1999, p. 54). A second ideology has been to further extend the principles of liberal individualism to let market forces be the primary distributive mechanism of educational goods and services as well as equity. This has led to a further watering down of what was already a relatively 'loose, gentle and weak' AA legislation. Finally, this is occurring in the context of the state 'pulling out' of responsibility for welfare and becoming a purchaser of educational services as well as a provider. The effect has been the rise of the individualisation of risk and responsibility which is borne disproportionately by women who disproportionately take up the slack of the state (Hancock 1999; Kenway and Langmead 1999). These tensions have all been evident in universities as the new mode of corporate governmentality has come into being.

For example, recent reports on the impact of enterprise bargaining indicate that many of the gains made by women during the 1980s are now at risk. These gains include the expansion of publicly funded child care, payment of family assistance to primary carers, equal pay, equal opportunity and anti discrimination legislation, affirmative action policies, increased access of women to higher education, gender equity policies and programs, increased justice through legal aid, recognition of rape and domestic violence against women, recognition of specific needs of women's health, and recognition of diversity amongst women (Hancock 1999, p. 3). It was most overt in the maintenance of the symbolic presence of women's advisors. But the decimation of the equity infrastructure and resources has reduced the capacity which gave these advisors the power to influence and strategically intervene. The irony is that Australia is now listed as at risk in areas of gender equality in 1999 by the same UNESCO and international bodies it helped create a decade ago. The rolling back of the welfare state has hit women hard, both in terms of 'pulling out the rug' from under equity infrastructure and targeted funding and dancing on the moving floor of international competitiveness.

There is also a disturbing pattern of academic employment emerging marked by its feminisation and casualisation, which reflects wider labour market shifts (Blackmore 1997). Recent studies indicate, there has been a hollowing out of the middle level ranks of full time academic staff, an increase in lower level sessional and contract staff, and a symbolic but not substantial increase in women in executive management but not at professorial status (Castleman et al 1995). A quick glance at the figures indicates that women have made few gains in terms of changing the gendered division of labour in education over the past 10 years in restructured systems in many Anglophone states pushing a neo liberal market agenda. For example in the UK. in 1996 women represented only 7-8% professors, 15-16% senior lecturers, 28-30% lecturers, 45% contract researchers and 48 % post graduates (Cited in Hearn 1999, p. 138). Instead, within universities, there were growing gradations between short term temporary or sessional staff, part time staff on contract, full time contract, tutors, associates, research assistants, post graduate / research assistants etc. Again a broad pattern emerges with a 71% increase of academic staff who are part time on pro rata contracts. At the same time, restructuring has had differential effects in different institutions. It was evident that in sandstone institutions, academics were under less challenge, more autonomous and less accountable. Newer institutions had a tendency to develop stronger managerialist tendencies, demanded greater accountability of staff and were more feminised, in part due to their earlier histories as colleges of advanced education with less of a academic research culture.(Hearn 1999, p. 137). Restructuring in universities, as more widely, has therefore effected women differently than their male colleagues, and some would argue has worsened their already weaker hold on institutional power(Woodall, and Welchman 1997).

This pattern also points to the growing bifurcation between managers and academics, and the emergence of new managerial career pathways within universities. Managers, promoted mostly on competence, can have a far more rapid rise into the more highly paid positions within the corporate university (the top salaries in any university are all management positions) (Kenway and Langmead 1999). Academics are still bound by long held principles of merit, scholarship, international reputation and research status which take time to develop. As well, academic career paths favour male academics (Kerfoot and Knights 1999). Winning the competitive research grants necessary for promotion is contingent upon long term career development and publication (Hattie and Marsh 1999). In amalgamated institutions particularly, there is a blurring between management and key academic titles which formerly had high academic status, such as professorships, which go automatically to those who are Head of School regardless of academic achievement. Academic work, which is highly specialised, lacks the generic characteristics of management, and therefore have less mobility than managers across areas and institutions. Paradoxically, while increasing contract employment at all levels may provide more easy access into upper academic echelons, lack of tenure, less well remunerated academic work and fewer promotional opportunities give women more access to a devalued profession.

Furthermore, many academics believe there is a fundamental shift away from the core work of teaching and research. Indeed, Kenway and Langmead (1999) suggest that managers now see what they do as the core work, and academics as peripheral work, much of which can be outsourced. This point articulates what many academic women were feeling in our study as the new managerialism holds sway in decision making rather than old academic principles. While this impacts on both male and female academics. Kerfoot and Knights (1999, p. 201) argue:

While accepting that masculinity is always in flux, bound up in contradiction and uncertainty, we nevertheless recognise that much of the managerial discourse has privileged those men and those women who are adept at reproducing its central tenets. Characterised by purposive instrumental rationality and disengaged forms of human interaction, we see this form of masculinity to be reproduced in the organisational and managerial practices of the UK university.

Finally, there are pressures to restrict academic salaries to the capacity of the institution or school to pay. This threatens to exacerbate differences between universities and between disciplines, as some universities and some faculties/ departments have more 'fat'. And again these demarcations are along gender lines given the popularity of management, IT and perceived low vocational or applied 'use value' of the humanities. All of this is situated in a system which has considerable tensions between the rhetoric of the free market and localised decisionmaking in a devolved system and the reality of managed market, centralised control through policy and funding and reduced academic decisionmaking in local decision making.

One gender equity manager summed up the contradictions and impact of decentralised centralisation:

I think within the university there is a devolution of function and a centralisation of power. I think that what is more likely to effect us is the move away from collegiality towards a management style because one of the planks on which work has been based has been discussion, representation, and developing the sensitivity to issues. It's more of a managerial style with the emphasis upon so called growth areas which are areas that are bringing in money. Issues for women don't really figure on that agenda necessarily. I

don't see money being a driving element in say a study of women's issues or a centre for women studies. The whole managerial ethic doesn't really place a lot of emphasis on the kinds of humanitarian perspectives which require a study of people and social interactions. It seems to work towards a constriction of values and I suppose a less flexible attitude to people and towards controlling people rather than having people interacting in a collegial way.

What this and other respondents in this study emphasised was that there has been no single oppositional moment which allows for collective action. Rather there has been a gradual erosion of benefits and sidelining of concerns about how restructuring is impacting on women as an 'academic underclass'. The diffuse and capillary like cultural restructuring is layered overed by the seemingly consistent, coherent and consensual nature of the new managerialism, with its superficial value neutrality, when indeed, there are strongly embedded emphasis on the values of competitive individualism, hierarchy and technical expertise. In this context, academics have come to subtly 'remake themselves' as 'designer employees' of the corporate university in ways which marginalise concerns about equity (Casey 1997, Blackmore and Sachs 2000). In the reconstruction of the designer employee, there are significant cognitive, emotional and value shifts which are required. The above has severe implications for women positioned within the academy as feminist activists, gender equity workers or change agents.

Feminism meets backlash politics

Eyre and Roman (1997) refer to how we simultaneously collide and collude with the academy because of our 'acceptance' of the rationalist discourses of the academy : discourses of academic merit, discourses about the need for restructuring and the centrality of the market. We do the work of the academy by making ourselves more desirable for the market, while rejecting the view that the market can be the primary distributive mechanism of social goods such as education. Backlash politics works through the subtle processes of self management, as a a mode of cultural restructuring and re-formation, and encourages the following:

- self censorship of political beliefs in a period in which loyalty is to the organisation undermines one's belief systems, and loyalty to colleagues or wider social movements.
- derisive formal and informal evaluations from unsympathetic colleagues and students.
- establishment of boundaries or disciplinary fields requiring boundary management work in very same disciplinary fields and boundaries feminists previously challenged.
- retrenchment of material and political support for particular programs or curriculum initiatives now threatened by rationalisations dictated to by market forces (Eyre and Roman 1997, p. 2).

Despite the discourse about improving teaching and learning in universities, various hierarchies embedded in universities remain and indeed are exacerbated by this hybrid reculturation of academic work cultures : dichotomies privileging research over teaching, have been reinvented with the additional privileging of management and market principles over research and teaching. It is women who tend to forego self promotion and invest themselves in promoting teaching cultures, community learning and staff development (Meehan 1999).

Blackmore (1999) has argued there is also a structural backlash which works in conjunction with the more subtle cultural restructuring putting women in universities on the defensive.

Restructuring can often mobilise what Clare Burton (1999) called 'male bias' in organisations. Those in power (who tend to be males) protect their positions overtly, restructuring works for those who have been there longest, and within the frame of old relationships eg. jobs for the boys. This is underpinned by what some argue is a psychological backlash motivated out of fear of change and indeed fear of 'the other', 'the different', which is readily transmuted into a desire for continuity. These are the emotional dimensions of this reculturation (Fineman 1993).

Despite this pessimistic scenario, we do not seek in this paper to decry what has been achieved in gender equity reform, or suggest that all is lost. Many EO officers and women in leadership in our research now agree that there has been a significant shift in attitude within senior management, though not necessarily reflected at middle management levels, about the importance of gender equity and recognition of diversity and cultural pluralism. At the same time, this shift is more evident in some universities than others, particularly those placing gender equity for women high in their priorities. A middle manager in a newly amalgamated university observed:

There are times you would get the boys playing golf together and that sort of thing which excludes and disadvantages the women. I'm conscious of where it occurs in the university. It used to occur at senior management but it doesn't now. I think overall this university really concentrates on its process. I've been involved in a number of university committees and I've seen a really strong commitment to issues of equity and social justice.

But even within universities, the discourse of equity is partial, absent or marginalised in specific institutional sites. Indeed, the nature of universities allows pockets if not fields of activity to remain relatively untouched by what appears to be significant equity policy advances. A senior middle manager (female) commented:

I think there's deep sexism in universities and it articulates in a different way than I was used to in the schools sector. You know there's horrific incredible arrogance that comes with the fact that someone who is intellectually successful in a tiny field and therefore can just say everything else is rubbish can actually just say incredibly ignorant things and feel very smug and feel so right.

Gender equity in practice

In general, gender equity practitioners recognise that past gains are continually under threat, and constant vigilance is required to maintain them, least of all make new advances. Some equity issues, such as sexual harassment, have been addressed more so in some education sectors than others. Carol Bacchi (1999, p. 75) argues that sexual harassment has now been identified as a 'institutional problem' with its popular currency, poor publicity for the institution and 'put off' to prospective students. This follows from the 1984 Sex Discrimination Act making sexual harassment illegal as well as the bad publicity from such infamous cases as that of Ormond College at the University of Melbourne. As a result, many universities reviewed their policies making them more sensitive to treating complaints seriously. Thus, prevention of sexual harassment is now considered good management practice.

The shifting nature of equity practice

Most gender equity practitioners indicated that there has been a 'watering down' through a number of discursive shifts within key sites of equity practice. We now turn to a discussion of four of these.

First, there has been linguistic slippage in the language used around EO and AA with its corporate appropriation and relocation in HRM. This is most obvious with the shift in the vocabulary of equity from equal opportunity and affirmative action to managing diversity in the last five years. In this frame, diversity has come to mean diversity of opinions, wants and desires in a 'free' society and consumer's market; and for institutions as provider of services to the offering of preferences which enables individual purchasers to exercise choice. Diversity is seen to be addressed if there are a range of academic programs, diverse pathways through education and training, diverse awards and modes of assessment. There is less concern about the substantive messages of the curriculum, the pedagogical relations, and the depth of inclusivity of difference other than reflected in the diversity of populations taking a unit

(Burbules 1998). There is little questioning as to whether the 'clients' have individually, least of all collectively, the capacity to exercise that choice or whether those who work within the institution are either representative of the client profile or concerned about inclusivity as curriculum, pedagogical or management issue. Recognition of diversity is more about improving market position within a more culturally diverse student population of internationalised higher education. As Woodall et al (1997) argue, equity (or diversity) is addressed only to the extent it fits within the managerialist frame.

But in so doing it reframes our understandings and practices around issues of disadvantage. The new managerialist emphasis on diversity not equity (Clarke et al 1994) tends to individualise the notion of disadvantage, and reduce it to individual needs and wants and not collective or systemic disadvantage to a group over time or discrimination against an individual due to their colour, race or sex. Thus equity re-emerges in the new strategic plans as 'meeting the diverse needs of students'. In general, therefore, the tendency is that diversity is 'severed from the histories of wider structural and cultural inequalities premised upon race and racism, gender, ethnicity and class (Mohanty 1997, p. xiv). As Deem and Ozga point out (1997, p. 33)

Whereas the concepts of equity and equal opportunities imply an underlying concept of social justice for all and active endeavours to achieve this, the notion of diversity invokes the existence of difference and variety without any necessary commitment to action or redistributive social justice.

Second, there is little intrusion of equity issues or even presence of equity officers in the powerful 'advisory' bodies to Deans and Vice Chancellors where the policy and 'hard;' financial decisions are made. This is most evident in the institutionalisation (and domestication?) of equity through management training of Heads of Schools and of selection panels and in gender balance policies in academic committees, in which equity is treated as a technical and legal problem rather than a substantive principle upon which to operate across a range of management practices.

Third, the emphasis in grievance as well as recruitment and promotion procedures is on procedural matters and not intent (equitable outcomes) or substantive issues. The effect is to devalue what women academics do. This ignores the impact of discourses and shifts in value systems associated with the 'corporate colonisation' (Deetz 1992) of universities which inform how these processes are brought into play, who is prepared to work the process, and how they are interpreted.

The fourth point follows from this. Namely, a total failure of organisations to deal with the psychic or emotional economies which permeate social relationships and sense of personal and professional identity. While sexual harassment is seen to be organisationally dysfunctional, the 'aberrant' individual and not the institution is generally blamed. Sexual

harassment is seldom considered to be a sign of an institutional environment that is unfriendly to women, largely treating them as 'one of the boys' or as the representative of 'the other'. Nor is it considered malicious treatment by male academics or administrators, but rather a combination of naivete and fear of the unknown' (Walker 1997, p. 43). Hearn (1999) suggests that we may merely have shifted from a non-bureaucratic male dominated feudal system I universities to a managerial male dominated feudal system. This is the culture many female executive encounter once in 'power' and which has been publicly named as disabling by some senior executive women (Gale 1998).

Hence, most women and leadership programs in universities (mentoring, shadowing of a manager) tend to develop the skills of the individual woman to 'play with the boys on the big field'. While this may mean individual women are promoted, a few even to the top, it also raises issues for women working for gender equity.

You constantly have to make sure you don't create a little clique like men create. It's so easy to do. Some of us with women's committees try to avoid nepotism in which someone taps others on the shoulder. I was determined not to privilege any people. I know I push agendas for openendedness and keeping as many involved as possible

In the section that follows equity strategies will be discussed.

Strategies

So equity is now seen to be part of the organisational structures in symbolic ways which do not intrude too much upon the distribution of resources or power. While all universities had equal opportunity policies and were required annually to report to the AAA until 1996, many of the women we interviewed had little sense that they were implemented or had much effect (see also Farish et al 1995). Many saw the new managerialism as subtly subverting or overtly appropriating the principles of EO for corporate and not equity ends. There are a range of successful equity practices which are now in place in many universities including women and leadership programs which emphasise collegial networks, shadowing programs, advice to women in research, career planning, mentoring (James 1996; Boucher 1997). But in essence, the emphasis has been on changing women to fit managerialism, and not to question the imperatives of new managerialism or the market. This produces significant dilemmas for women leaders and academics who reject these value shifts but work within a management structure which uncritically assumes such values.

Some universities have actively promoted equity as their market niche. Women are viewed as the new source of leadership and are positioned as change agents (the majority of new Vice Chancellors or CEOs appointed in the past 2 years are female) which symbolically resolves the dilemma of representation of diversity. In so doing it can tap into now highly popularised feminist discourses about women's styles of leadership that suggests women are more communicative, consensual, collaborative and caring (Weiner 1995, Blackmore 1999). Buried in all this is some naturalising gender binary which locates women academics in highly contradictory and antithetical positions. They are caught between the scientific representation of rational inquiry of the old university and the politically correct moral position assumed within equity principles (Yeatman 1994, p. 46).

However some equity practitioners recognised the irony that while devolution seemed more democratic, in practice it was perceived to be more controlling of academics, with new modes of accountability and surveillance. Yet equity workers have found that equity reform often relies on strong top down interventions and monitoring, the very things they as academics find disempowering in other aspects of their work. Within the new frame, the key

strategy was seen to integrate equity into the corporate framework, which some universities did better than others. Any small achievements were seen as part of a long slow process of change.

I'm hoping that the kinds of things we've been doing here in building up a broader base will help us a great deal. I know that in some institutions that doesn't happen and that very often equal opportunity units are seen as being very remote from what concerns people out in the chalk face. I hope that that isn't the case here and I'm hoping that we've got a broad enough base of support and enough key people who can make sure that we do survive for the short term. We're not going to complete affirmative action in our lifetime. It's a system which is taken many thousands of years to develop and I don't think you get rid of it in a hundred years (Senior female equity manager).

The variety of programs established in universities eg. shadowing programs, assertiveness, career planning, mentoring, tended to encourage women to focus upon improving their career possibilities through doing more research or moving into leadership and management positions. Few directly confronted the issue of the culture of management or corporate values. Any attempts to shift value systems were seen to be better achieved subversively. Some academic women expressed an ambivalence toward women and leadership programs. They felt caught between the desire to be supportive and collegial and to play the numbers game leading to individual success.

I have done the research development leadership thing. At the time it was there was a team of 4 women. We did a lot of workshops, met regularly, talked about our careers, about what people needed at various times in their career and how we could facilitate this. We had visitors in a series of workshops and did a needs analysis. But I found that in the end I had a real problem with the whole mentoring concept. Fairly productive women were being put in those roles where they would do workshops and do all that support stuff. But where I'm happiest and most useful is actually just being quiet and alone and getting on with it. So it really interfered with my own selfish needs to do work (Female Associate Professor, new amalgamated institution).

Other contradictions emerged when women assumed token positions on committees for gender balance. While they felt the expectation to speak for other women, they were also seen to be aberrant when they raised equity as an issue.

Sometimes I didn't have enough information from the agendas to see where an equity issue may arise till I got there. So then I might react a bit more off the cuff. But I think you get to a stage when they (male colleagues) won't accept your idiosyncrasies. They would see my focus on fairness to be just an idiosyncrasy (Associate Professor, newly amalgamated institution).

Women's presence alone was seen to be enough, and any attempt to extend this to voicing concerns about equity was treated as going too far. Women felt they were positioned differently because of this from male colleagues, as a potentially disruptive element. This was most evident when they moved from a position of relatively less power to more formal positions of power. Suddenly their idiosyncrasies became mainstream.

As a Senior Lecturer they wouldn't accept my arguments about fairness but as Head Of School and as Associate Professor they did. Then when I was made Acting Dean, they were stunned, and they all came in here one by one

and just chatted and talked about things. I think they wanted to build a bridge and see if they could make a bond and then get a special deal. I then had more power which they recognised. I had power to sign or not sign all their forms. It was different being Acting Dean. Before just as a Associate Professor and Head of School they were willing to accept me as having idiosyncrasies. When I was acting Dean and had actual power that changed. Even now I'm no longer Dean yet I notice that they're very different to me (female Dean, New Amalgamated Institution).

The advice most gave as to how to work strategically for equity within universities was to work strategically, be well informed, make alliances, 'suss out the ground', get to know the system in its entirety, keep your head down unless you know you can win. For one woman in senior management it meant undertaking more committee work, being political and working collegially with other women.

I am the only academic on the university staff development committee. The committee is into corporate goals and plans and I wanted to be strategically placed on the committee. I got there through the union because I wanted to have a voice in how decisions are made in relation to academics and most particularly in relation to women and the type of support women need. I encourage other women to get a profile by working on faculty and university committees. You need to get close to positions that you want to resist, to understand that position from the inside and to find out how others operate. I realised when on staff development committees many women did not realise the implications of policies and did not know how to respond strategically. I would talk to the Dean the VC and senior management. I got some good advice from a senior female now in executive management position. She said "Stop harping and blowing and huffing. Either come up with something or go away because you can get a whole lot of people fired on an issue if you shoot your mouth off when not properly informed."

Performativity and Equity

So what was different for gender equity work in the performative rather than the bureaucratic university? First, it was clear that some universities closely identified with EEO for women academics and staff and therefore have made a public commitment to that position. EEO was central to their market and image. This meant top down commitment, whether in the form of EEO policy, recruitment of senior executive staff or making EEO high status in their profile. In other universities, EEO has undergone radical regression during periods of restructuring in a era of structural and cultural backlash. Restructuring offered opportunities to either promote or resist EEO. It was largely dependent upon the individual personalities of executive leadership, the CEO and the CEO's close advisers in particular, as to which direction was taken. With the concentration of power more overtly in the hands of the VC and managers in the now leaner and meaner corporate institutions, the fate of EEO was too often dependent upon the personal attitude of VC's. A senior gender equity officer in a sandstone university observed:

It is all about whose interests it is in to push gender equity. It certainly is not in the interest of powerful men to do it or for others to earn brownie points. It depends upon whether they see it is political or not to do so.

Second, in order to put pressure on management, EEO workers had to tap into 'hot' topics in the new discourse of education reform rather than make claims on old 1970s territory of justice, entitlement or values. Indeed, many of the sandstone universities with a strong

research base did not care whether they have good AA. Their corporate objective was to be seen as pre-eminent in research and globally relevant. There was little status or money in equity, particularly in the context that equity as a policy imperative was being downgraded and devalued by conservative government policies and funds were being cut off the Affirmative Action Agency and the Human Rights Commission. This placed increased pressure on policy activists within the organisation who had a sense of such histories. As one EEO director in a sandstone university commented

The affirmative action structures that encourage universities to adopt AA are weak. The AA Agency is appalling and has no clout. This institution doesn't have to report for 3 years so we are expected to comply, but so what. We are therefore working to established internal mechanisms which oblige faculties to report to Council. But Council does not necessarily see it as important. EEO is only one small corner of a large tapestry of this institution - rather like a thread running through.

Third, the emphasis on performativity and accountability has meant EEO strategies have been caught on their own strategic stick! In seeking to bed down EEO into everyday practice, the effect of the mainstreaming of gender equity principles has been to permeate equity issues throughout the institutional processes through profiles, employment contracts, committee systems and promotion procedures with the aim of making university procedures transparent. In so doing, it has fed into the voraciousness of an increasingly outcomes driven sector for data collection and accountability. This in turn has a rebound effect on EEO units which are increasingly spending time on reporting, monitoring and collecting data and less on strategic change work. One EO officer described this as the housekeeping work, with fewer resources. She added:

I am going to have to put more effort into data collection and less into programs such as mentoring schemes which address the critical things like cultural change and networking and develop a groundswell of support and conscious raising around the university.

Another commented:

The primary concern here is about comparability with other institutions and not enough time to actually improve the figures. One needs some mapping of the institution in order to go to Deans etc and point out difficulties and target problems. But this should not be all that we do. The planning division should be able to supply the stats so we can do the work that is required from analysis - but they do not see it as their job.

Fourth, equity for women staff was still dominated by the discourse about getting the numbers of women into leadership. But EEO is not, as many EEO practitioners commented, about getting any woman into leadership. It is more about getting women up who adhere to a particular set of values and commitment to promote and become advocates for women within the institution. As one EEO practitioner commented:

There are some women I would not want to be in a senior position. They are not going to contribute to a culture of diversity. However, AA has promoted particular women. They're Anglo and not working class - well groomed you might say. So the question is who do we target when we talk about moving women into leadership? What is it about women that we are valuing that are going to benefit the organisation? Because not all women have values which will benefit the organisation (or women in the organisation).

Fifth, the time ahead was seen to be difficult for gender equity and those working for gender equity in universities as the federal government and the state withdrew funding from this area. The lack of commitment from federal level to gender equity, whether it be in reduction of funding to AA Agency or Women's Advisor to the PM or to the reporting to the United Nations has significant symbolic effects. It was seen to give the message that equity for women was no longer something that university managers have to worry about. One EO manager saw the AA agency as 'toothless - now more so as it has been gutted of resources and infrastructure but retained for its symbolic value alone.'

Finally, performativity provided both opportunities and difficulties with regard to EEO strategies. Opportunities in the sense that one could build EO objectives into performance outcomes and call upon the discourses of managing diversity to gain credibility. But this often stayed at the level of discourse and did not infiltrate practice. As Maggie Humm (1995) argues in the English context (but one which also has relevance for Australia) equity is being (mis)used to argue for the restructuring of academic career paths along more flexible lines. The suggestion is that tenure was a barrier for women, and so removal of tenure will remove a barrier for women's access to higher positions in the academy. Such arguments ignore the fact that the undermining of academic work conditions more generally debilitates the capacity for women as well as men to take up such opportunities. Indeed, increased competition, incentive schemes, open cultures, action and calculated risk - taking are all notions associated with male behaviours in the market place (although not of male academics in the old academy). There is little to no protection offered around important workplace issues of title, professional development or study leave as core aspects of academic's work.

On the other hand, performativity demands also meant that universities, preoccupied in the competitive relationships of the market in the search for comparative advantage, are reluctant to learn from other institutions in terms of best practice in EEO. While new management theorists talk about learning organisations, market segmentation actively blocks out the desire of 'high status' higher education institutions being seen to learn from others when every institution claims the competitive edge of being the best. This was particularly evident in the approach of the sandstone universities in this study. On the one hand their jockeying to 'be the best' meant they could not adopt or even adapt any other sandstone university's policy even if successful. On the other hand, it meant outright rejection of successful EEO programs modelled in newer 'wannabe' institutions. It was suggested to one equity practitioner to take up such programs but was 'like comparing apples and oranges'. Any bench marking on best practice was restricted to the 'Group of Eight', which meant they actually ignored significant initiatives and best practice in equity recognised nationally and internationally in other universities. The argument was that somehow sandstone universities were 'different' and therefore had to be treated differently (more sensitively/don't rock the boat) than newer universities. Thus the difference between old/new/middle aged universities was being purposefully and discursively constructed on a daily basis. The irony is that sandstone organisations claim to be operating on the basis of best business and educational practice, yet such responses indicate them to be unreflexive and unresponsive institutions.

So with the privatisation of universities and dominance of market cultures, what can be future strategies? Clare Burton (1999) argued that governments need to extend regulatory framework and reporting etc imposed on public organisations to more private organisations to enforce employer obligations with regard to merit and equity, and to require greater transparency

New practices, old issues?

Many saw that the nature of universities and indeed educational governance had changed so radically that old rules and games no longer existed and that there was a call for new strategies eg. coopting the managerial agenda, or sometimes reviving old ones for new times; bottom up activism. A senior academic from a sandstone university commented:

The reason why you have diversity is because that's how you learn about the new. We have to recognise that maybe the institutions are not going to deliver the kind of vertical integration of women that a lot of equity strategies were previously based on. Maybe it is going to be just bloody hard and under those sorts of circumstances perhaps what is needed is more direct mobilisations. The other thing is the problem with that vertical strategy is that it focuses all our energies on achieving within the parameters that are set by the institution. Now if that increasingly becomes dysfunctional why do we do that?

We're getting increasing numbers of women at a vice chancellor level. I guess ultimately you've just got to rely on the fact that there are enough people who are mobilising those sorts of energies that the message will start to get through. When you think back to the 1960's nobody would of thought that we'd ever get issues to do with equity taken seriously. Maybe it's just that same process all over again.

The question is whether in an era of de-institutionalisation (flexible learning, outsourcing) and re-institutionalisation (new managerialism), institutions (courts, government, organisations) themselves can be relied on to deliver and maintain issues of equity. The conditions for strategic work have radically changed, with a competitive rather than collective impetus, and highly individualised responses by both academics and institutions. This may restrict the extent to which policy activists and bottom up practitioner initiatives can produce more generalisable reforms, although they may gain some advances in specific contexts (Yeatman 1998). Equity has been left up to the good will and commitment of individual managers, most of them men, many who could possibly lose out with the hotter competition and who had an investment in the status quo. In particular, the argument was that unless there was a strong top down impetus for managers on the ground to implement policies, little would happen. The problem is how to shift cultures in large corporate organisations, the role of leadership and also of the psychic economy of organisations.

The ongoing tension for feminist work in large institutions is the issue of dissemination, coordination and representation. The extent to which individual women in leadership positions could be expected to do the work of equity for the institution was also seen to be limited. One equity practitioner commented:

I think key women are constantly being peeled off and maybe replaced. It will take about 30 years to overcome that sort of thing in terms of proportions and getting to senior positions. I must say here in the administrative area they have recently made a number of quite high level appointments of women and the registrar has been heard to say quite publicly that you know from among the canvassing of women that they're just so outstanding and they all just walked in . So you know there are counter sort of pressures going there. But I just worry. I really do have this feeling that we've probably just about reached where we're going to get too for a number of reasons.

Many women saw the future lay with improving women's resiliency through support mechanisms which could work institutionally. Some senior academics said:

I think the strength is that women help women. The bottom line is that women work collaboratively and get strength from each other. They share expertise and support each other. There are also a range of systemic things that can work eg. sex harassment officers, contact officers and women and leadership programs. I think there is an upside and downside when women are placed in positions and expected to make a difference. Women need to be involved and women are committed to make a difference - but it can also backfire because of the workload and when women cannot achieve the change expected of them.

I think there's a conscious effort within the institution to give women opportunities to the leadership roles, there's no doubt about that. But as for the promotions, there's an equal opportunity person there and that gives you great comfort when you're in front of these panels for interviews.

Newman (1995) suggests that there are three levels at which action may need to be taken to achieve change in practice rather than superficial change.

- Symbolic level which signals what is valued.
- Organisational level of practices and norms of behaviour embedded in structures and processes.
- Values layer indicated by deeply held attitudes and beliefs.

What has occurred in an era of performativity is to seek to deal with equity symbolically as a market ploy to gain comparative advantage rather than substantive issue of fairness. Most universities in Australia and elsewhere have policies about affirmative action, equal employment opportunity and women and leadership programs, and yet women's position as a group within these institutions has to some extent worsened rather than improved (Hearn 1999; Powney 1997). The move to markets and managerialism has meant that the university has undergone a significant value shift. The norms so typical of education of 'entitlement, universality and equality of opportunity' which were the motivating factors for many women managers getting into management have been replaced by norms of competitive individualism.

We would want to suggest that this may work in the short term, but that the degree to which an individual's loyalty in the long run is severely tested by the significant 'disjuncture between the university's stated goals of "diversity"/affirmative action politics, and its actual practices in actively undermining these very goal and policies' (Mohanty 1997, p. xiii). There is a sense of organisational malaise, a marking time and sense of meeting market need and accountability demands as the driving forces with less sense of direction or social improvement. Any sense of progress has collapsed into self maximising 'habits of consumption'. It could be attributed more broadly in the context of corporate colonisation which signals a loss of meaningful public democracy as the corporation has become the most central institution in modern society. As Ozga and Walker (1999, p. 110) argue:

Its not simply that marketisation and the new funding regimes make equal opportunities policies more difficult to sustain; there is also a sense in which the economising of education excludes these issues as legitimate concerns of educational organisations and their managers.

As well Deetz (1992, p. 1) claims that:

everything from personal identity and use of natural resources to definitions of value and distribution of goods and services has increasingly come under corporate control.

To this one would add control over determining what constitutes valued knowledge as well as control over communication and information channels. It is, as Deetz (1992) argues, achieved through a form of 'consent manufactured in the workplace, reproduced in routine daily practices and hidden in the assumption of an open contractual relation' (p. 1). Because of this, resistance is less focused, collective and ordered. But this loss of meaning it is indicative of the gap between power and meaning in liberal 'market democracies' and corporations in which there are no reference points, no sense of shared futures or common explanatory frameworks while at the same time we are never more interdependent (Laidi, 1998, p.1).

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