

The Plan for Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination for Basic Education in the Turku Teacher Training School and Turku International School

1. Introduction

According to the Act of Equality between Women and Men (915/2016): “In all their activities, authorities must promote equality between women and men purposefully and systematically.” This requirement includes every authority working in every domain under the government and municipalities. “Authorities, education providers and other bodies providing education and training as well as employers are obliged to take pre-emptive action in a purposeful and systematic manner against all discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression.” In addition, since 2015 the law has required education providers in basic education to draw up a plan for equality. The plan in the Turku Teacher Training School (Norssi) and Turku International school (TIS) has been compiled as a tool to prevent discrimination and inequality based on gender, culture, religion, ethnicity, illness or disablement. The objective of the plan is to examine equality as concretely as possible.

The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (OPS 2014) draws attention to questions concerning equality, gender and culture. The curriculum gives direction towards diversity and recognising it not only as a value but also as a practical way, for instance, to develop school culture and to identify possible gender divisions in different subjects.

In compiling and monitoring the effect of the plan for equality and equity, the primary tool is a questionnaire repeatedly addressed to all the pupils in basic education. This plan was updated in the autumn of 2019 using the results of the equality and equity questionnaire of spring 2019.

2. Description of the current equality situation in Norssi and TIS

In the spring of 2019 the equality and equity questionnaire was addressed to the pupils from 3rd to 9th grade using an electronic Forms-survey. The questionnaire contained statements with an answering scale from 1 to 5 and open boxes in which an answer

could be elaborated on. The questionnaire was answered under the guidance of the classroom or homeroom teacher. The answers were submitted anonymously. The number of respondents according to grade level were as follows:

3rd grade – 0
4th grade – 32
5th grade – 33
6th grade – 58
7th grade – 69
8th grade – 78
9th grade – 21

The results of the questionnaire formed the basis for the plan of equality and equity.

2.1 General Well-being at School

Already the previous questionnaire brought to light that not all pupils find it easy to turn to a teacher or other adult at school if they have concerns. According to the most recent questionnaire, this is still an area requiring attention (3.61/3.35).

The class teachers, homeroom teachers and the pupil welfare personnel are instructed to encourage the pupils to turn to the adults at school with their concerns. The pupil welfare personnel participate in class activities and lessons as much as possible to become familiar to and with the pupils. Based on the previous questionnaire, a plan for homeroom guidance was formulated for lower secondary school. It contains a three-year programme for homeroom teachers' sessions. In addition, a school specific annual plan for the pupil welfare group was drawn up for initial implication in 2019-2020.

The pupil welfare personnel are available at school every day. The pupils and their parents' are informed of the pupil welfare services on offer and of their office hours.

2.2 Equality Experienced by the Pupils

The way pupils experience equality was evaluated through the questionnaire from two different viewpoints: On the one hand, how pupils experience the actions of adults

regarding equality and equity, and on the other hand, how pupils experience their relationships with other pupils regarding equality and equity.

Based on the questionnaire in 2019, it seems that the pupils experience of equality has improved compared to the previous questionnaire. In the previous questionnaire, problematic issues were as follows: 1) gender affects how a teacher treats a pupil, 2) there are different expectations for different genders, 3) not all genders are encouraged in the same manner, 4) gender influences who gets to answer the most during a lesson, 5) teachers do not encourage all genders in the same way, 6) pupils experience moving a pupil to sit next to a pupil of a different gender as a disciplinary measure. 7) understanding Finnish affects what is required from a pupil, and 8) quiet and loud pupils are not given attention equally.

Teachers and personnel have received training in equality and, for instance, gender diversity. The unification of assessment has been promoted by increasing teachers' cooperation with each other and training teachers in co-teaching. All teachers have received training in responsible language-awareness in teaching. Abiding by the rules commonly agreed on still needs attention.

Compared to the previous questionnaire, the pupils' interaction with each other has not significantly improved. Commenting on other pupils' appearance, cultural background, gender and sexual orientation still needs to be addressed and the pupils need to be further educated in this matter. Teachers are to be role models and actively intervene in problematic situations that they come across. Teachers will continue to receive training in preventing violence and bullying, and also in preventing sexual harassment and intervening in it.

2.3 Books and Other Learning Material

The questionnaire of spring 2019 did not contain a section on books or other teaching material. Teachers are instructed to be critical when reading and choosing teaching material. Pupils are to be taught critical reading skills as well.

2.4 Harassment and Sexual Harassment

According to the answers in the spring 2019 questionnaire, attention still needs to be paid to all types of harassment.

In the previous questionnaire, a significant number of respondents had experienced verbal harassment, for instance name calling, indecent or vulgar language, and indecent messages or calls. A smaller but still significant group of respondents had experienced advances or physical touching that felt unpleasant or distressing.

The school staff has been instructed to pay attention to harassment and especially sexual harassment. In addition, extra training in this matter has been given to the staff. This will continue. Different forms of harassment and sexual harassment, the right to self-determination and the right to physical and mental integrity is dealt with in lessons as a natural part of education. This will be continued.

3. Assessing the Implementation of the Plan

The implementation of the plan and the development of the equality situation are assessed in the school specific communal pupil welfare group (KOR) and in teachers' meetings. The questionnaire is repeated regularly with the pupils. Guardians are informed about it as well.