



TEACHING GENDER IN THE MILITARY

A Handbook

Callum Watson, with the participants of the Vienna Reviewers' Workshop,
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Conclusion

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Teaching gender in the military: Where do we go from here?

Over the last decade coaching and mentoring programmes have gained in popularity in many organizations, This handbook started by highlighting that gender is an often invisible part of social life. Hopefully, by this point the authors of this handbook have made gender more visible to the reader, especially in military contexts. In addition, the handbook has hopefully demonstrated *what* teaching gender in the military comprises, *why* it is a relevant topic worthy of being both taught in its own right and embedded across the curriculum, and *how* an instructor might go about teaching it. The past experience of many of the authors would suggest that this is the point at which readers are likely to feel overwhelmed and wonder where to start in implementing what they have learned. Some readers, such as gender advisers, may have an explicit mandate to implement gender perspectives into an area of their work. Probably, though, most readers are simply individuals convinced of the importance of improving gender equality wherever they can, even though this is not formally part of their work. This handbook attempts to appeal to both categories of reader by concluding with an overview of what the integration of gender into military education might look like over time and what an individual reader's role might be this process.

Changing attitudes towards something as fundamental as gender norms may seem an impossible task given the size of the military (approximately 1 per cent of the workforce in NATO countries¹) and the way in which traditional gender roles seem to be entrenched. Studies in military sociology, however, suggest that norm creation – such as an individual member's attitudes towards gender equality – is influenced to the greatest extent at the primary level, in other words within the smallest military units (e.g. squads or platoons).² What this means is that while top-down policies where there are hierarchical chains of command can be very effective in shaping norms that improve gender equality, in the absence of sufficient policies, these norms can still be instilled at the primary unit level by motivated individual leaders. The evidence also suggests that when these two factors come together, the need to resort to punitive measures to ensure compliance with institutional policies decreases significantly.³ In other words, even if readers have the impression that the impact of their actions will be limited to a single class or a single unit, this should not discourage them. On the contrary – sustainable change is more likely to come about if a large number of individuals work to change mindsets in their immediate workplaces than through purely top-down changes in policy. Indeed, most of those who contributed to the development of this handbook would be able to identify one event or one individual that was instrumental in convincing them of the importance of integrating a gender perspective into their daily life and work.

Another challenge that readers are likely to face is where to start – what activities can they do right away, and what needs to happen in the medium to long term? In many instances, national and regional policies (mentioned in Chapter 2) can be useful for establishing current priorities, especially national action plans on UN

Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325⁴ and women, peace and security.⁵ In addition, the following sections, developed by participants at the handbook's review conference, provide some suggestions for different activities that can be undertaken in the short, medium and long terms.

What can be done now?

There are wide number of small but effective tasks that can be implemented immediately upon reading this manual. When considering what kinds of initial activities to prioritize and how to argue for their implementation, it can help to return to a statement made in the introduction to this handbook: gender in the military is an operational necessity, a legal obligation and a response to a humanitarian need. With this in mind, the following activities constitute some recommended initial steps.

1. Disseminate materials

One of the first tasks is to identify those who are willing to integrate gender into their teaching but do not know how to, as well as those who need to be convinced to give their permission for this to happen, such as superiors. Disseminating this handbook and relevant documents mentioned in the annotated bibliographies of each of the chapters can be a good starting point. By giving those who are relatively new to the subject an idea of what teaching gender in the military might entail, it will be easier to make the case for at least trying to integrate some new gender-related content into parts of the existing curriculum. In addition, handbooks like this one can be used to reach out to key people who control the distribution of resources, to highlight how they can seek to benefit by allocating resources to this topic and how this would fit within the wider scope of other activities currently being undertaken by NATO members and partner countries. Considering who would need what materials in order to initiate gender-related activities would therefore be a good first step.

2. Identify and map interested colleagues

The dissemination of gender-related materials and discussing gender-related topics with peers, colleagues and superiors can help identify others who may be willing to support the greater integration of gender into military education. In some cases, it may be that colleagues have relevant knowledge on the topic or are similarly interested in collaborating. In other instances, it may be that they are willing to allow an external person to add gender components to their existing educational content.

3. Map existing activities or those with relevant content

Several contributors to this handbook have come across situations where individuals are mandated to teach gender-related topics but lack the relevant expertise and struggle in silence with parts of their syllabus. People in this situation are often only too happy to receive resources that might help them or work with others who are enthusiastic about the subject. There are also cases where gender is not taught in courses that lend themselves to these kinds of discussions, for example those on conduct and discipline, the protection of civilians or human rights. It is usually easier to make the case for the inclusion of gender into these kinds of courses at the early stages. In some cases it may be that there are even resources available for teaching gender that are not being used.

4. Develop new content

Where readers have a degree of freedom or flexibility in deciding what to teach, they can lead by example by either introducing modules on gender specifically and/or integrating discussions related to gender into existing educational content. It can also be beneficial to develop a short "Gender in the Military 101" session that can be slotted into existing introductory courses if and when the opportunity arises.

5. Consider existing classroom gender dynamics

Chapter 6 discussed how the gender dynamics of the classroom can put some learners at an advantage and others at a disadvantage based on their gender (in combination with other factors such as age, rank and ethnic origin). While some of these factors are the consequence of deep-rooted social norms, by simply taking a moment to consider the gender dynamics in a given classroom instructors can make subtle changes that yield significant benefits. Very simply, recording how often female and male learners raise their hands and are invited to speak, as well as roughly how long they speak for, and comparing this to the gender balance of the class as a whole can be informative. Giving a few extra seconds before taking a response from a learner can encourage those who are less confident to participate more.

What can be done within one year from now?

Many of the tasks in this list involve trying to move beyond *ad hoc* activities that rely on the initiative of a single motivated person towards sustainable changes in the curriculum and in working practices. While it is unlikely that *all* of the actions on this list could be accomplished in one year, having some of them in mind should help prepare readers to make use of small windows of opportunity to institutionalize gender perspectives when they arise.

1. Integrate gender into institutional doctrine

One of the most effective ways of moving away from *ad hoc* approaches to teaching gender to the military is to ensure that it is mandated, not simply recognized as good practice. As Chapter 2 can attest, the creation of UNSCR 1325 provided the momentum necessary for military institutions to start addressing the different needs of women, men, girls and boys in conflict-related settings. This is most effective when translated into documents at the institutional level, so including a commitment to incorporate gender perspectives in all aspects of military education in institutional doctrines and mission statements can have a lasting effect. Not only does this transform gender from being a side consideration to becoming a core aspect of the institution's work, but it can push those without knowledge on the subject to action in seeking out experts and resources on the topic.

2. Implement new and newly identified resources

As new resources are developed or identified, it is important to look for opportunities to implement them. To facilitate the use of identified potentially relevant articles, case studies, pictures and videos, they should be stored in way that gives access to all faculty who wish – or are mandated – to address gender within their educational programmes. Having pictures of women and men working in non-traditional roles can be particularly useful to improving publications and PowerPoint presentations. Most institutions will have a few employees who are interested in photography and have taken pictures while on tour without realizing their potential educational value. There may also be existing institutional knowledge, such as learners or faculty who have previously worked as gender advisers on tour or on mission. Writing up these experiences and turning them into classroom resources (e.g. as case studies) can facilitate their use. In most cases, however, other faculty will need to be persuaded that these new resources will assist them in meeting their learning objectives.

3. Integrate gender into standard/compulsory courses

One of the best ways of institutionalizing gender into military education is to make it an integral component of compulsory, entry-level courses. In this case, it may be useful to develop a "Gender for the Military 101" course that can also be used elsewhere if the opportunity arises. However, a more effective and long-term approach would be to ensure that case studies, examples, pictures and videos used across the curriculum incorporate both women's and men's experiences. At the very least, care should be taken to ensure that female members of security forces are depicted as well as men in the civilian population, and that gender-biased language is eradicated (e.g. servicemen if not referring specifically to male personnel). Keeping this in mind when checking content, or explicitly offering to apply a "gender lens" to existing content, can be a first step in this regard.

4. Invite guest speakers to talk on gender-related topics

Guest speakers can play several important roles by talking about gender-related topics. First of all, if they are high profile, they may attract the attention of high-level members of an institution to the importance of talking about gender. They can be inspirational to others, and can sometimes bring like-minded faculty and learners together and help to identify some concrete actions that can be taken within the institution itself. They may also demonstrate the utility of gender-related aspects of the curriculum in the kinds of everyday work the learners aspire to do. If one is alert to the possibility of inviting a guest speaker, it is likely that several opportunities may present themselves over the course of a year. Potential speakers may be passing through the area on other business and add a short speech to their itinerary. It may also be possible to include talks or panels on gender in existing conferences, such as those that take place on an annual basis. At the very least, highlighting all-male panels or indeed all-male conferences can serve as a wake-up call to those who consider themselves to be gender-neutral.

5. Create committees to follow up on progress

Developing coalitions with other willing employees is an effective way to identify opportunities as they arise, share ideas and resources and ensure that any negative effects caused by changes of personnel are minimized. It is also a good way to avoid duplication and coordinate the replication of pilot projects that have been run in other parts of the institution. One of the most important roles, however, is to monitor progress so that the effectiveness of all gender-related activities can be measured later on. In some cases activities can be formalized, especially if other cross-cutting committees already exist or small amounts of funding are earmarked for gender-related work. Informal committees composed of like-minded individuals who meet on an *ad hoc* basis can be effective. It may also be that existing structures such as women's associations are interested in looking at how women are represented in military education.

What can be done within three years from now?

Over the course of three years, faculty should be able to start refining their approach to teaching gender in the military based on evaluations of their initial activities. In some cases, having data that prove the benefit and effectiveness of integrating gender into military education can help make the case for diverting some of the institution's resources towards more formalized positions and programmes. While some activities may turn out to have been ineffective, there should now be a larger pool of interested and increasingly experienced faculty available to help shape innovative new approaches.

1. Evaluate and revise content and approaches

After three years, it should be possible to start collecting level 4 evaluations which indicate the tangible results of a learning process and whether it has resulted in a change of attitudes, biases and interests on the part of learners (see Chapter 8). In a military context, this can be done by contacting learners who have graduated from the institution and evaluating the effect of their education after they take on professional roles. Having created a generation of learners who have gone into these roles with the language and skills to analyse the gendered dimensions of their work, there may be new insights that could be incorporated into the curriculum. Not least, it is likely that some of the more generic examples and case studies that were initially used can be adapted to be more specific to the actual work the learners will end up doing. These evaluation processes should also highlight situations where the desired change has not been achieved and a new approach is required. In any case, legal and policy frameworks relating to gender are likely to have been updated within this timeframe, resulting in revisions to educational content. In addition, the military may have shifted its geographical focus, meaning that new cases need to be developed or existing ones updated.

2. Formalize gender-related roles and functions within the institution

Much of the work on gender in educational institutions takes place in addition to an already full programme. Inevitably this involves individuals either not dedicating as much work to the topic as they would like or the work spills into their free time. One solution is to create gender advisers and/or gender focal points within the institution who have a percentage of their time specifically dedicated to gender-related work. The data collected through course evaluations and other monitoring mechanisms should help build the case for the creation of these kinds of roles. In some situations it may also be desirable and feasible to formalize gender coaching and mentoring programmes at this point (see Chapter 10), as well as previously informal committees working on gender.

3. Faculty development

As the case for mainstreaming gender across the curriculum becomes increasingly strong, it may become necessary to implement faculty development programmes. These can be coordinated by those who now have up to three years' experience of integrating gender in their work, but it may also be possible to draw upon existing national or regional networks such as universities and organizations involved in the drafting of national action plans on women, peace and security or networks within the Partnership for Peace Consortium. While providing a forum for sharing good practices may be a good first step, a more comprehensive approach will usually involve delving into academic literature, such as gender studies and feminist security studies, in order to empower instructors to apply a gender perspective to their particular area of expertise. Coaching programmes (see Chapter 10) may also be a more effective and sustainable approach to faculty development than a one-off course.

4. Integrate gender into curriculum review processes

Having demonstrated the relevance of gender to several pilot areas of the curriculum, it may now be possible to mainstream gender across the curriculum through the review process (see Chapter 4). As this is the most effective and sustainable way to institutionalize the inclusion of a gender perspective in all areas of the curriculum, it should be a high priority for faculty convinced of the importance of gender equality to try to influence curriculum review processes. Coupled with other activities such as faculty development and the provision of increasingly relevant gender-related educational resources, educational institutions should be increasingly equipped to support all of their staff in integrating a gender perspective by this point.

5. Refine strategies for monitoring progress and evaluating results

With an increasing number of faculty working to incorporate gender perspectives into their teaching and a growing number of perspectives on what this can and should achieve, there may now be opportunities to consider whether existing monitoring mechanisms are still adequate for measuring the impact these educational approaches are having on learners. Notably, it may be worth considering whether some of the high levels of learning in Bloom's taxonomy (see Chapter 7) are being reached. In other words, instead of just testing learners' ability to recall what they have learnt, new methods may need to be developed to monitor and evaluate their ability to apply this to areas of their work which are not explicitly related to gender.

What can be done within five years from now?

The experience of working on integrating gender into military education over the course of five years will, according to those who contributed to this handbook, result in someone being able to call themselves an expert in this area. Activities in this timeframe focus on documenting good practices so that others may benefit, as well as sharing insights to expand the work into areas not yet envisaged by this handbook.

1. Document institutional good practices

While every institution is different, many will have developed good practices that are relevant to others. Documenting institutional good practices is an effective way to share these practices, and can be used to adapt, validate or perhaps challenge current approaches that are advocated at national and regional levels. Creating a pool of evidence can also be a way of supporting individuals who have faced higher levels of resistance to integrating gender in their institution. While this may be a rather straightforward recommendation, it is often overlooked, meaning that others cannot benefit from the experience of those who have gone before them and mistakes often get repeated.

2. Contribute to communities of practice

After analysing the results of multiple evaluations and amassing experience in diverse areas of military education, the readers of this handbook should be in a position to contribute to future institutional, national, regional and international discussions on how to teach gender in the military by, for example, suggesting updates to the content of handbooks such as this one. They should also be in a position to act as mentors and coaches to others coming into this area of work.

3. Validation

Validation can be seen as the final stage in a curriculum review process. Whereas evaluation examines whether the desired learning outcomes have been achieved (see Chapter 8), validation involves testing whether achieving the stated learning outcomes has produced the anticipated effect in terms of workplace performance. A validation process seeks to use both surveys and interviews to establish which parts of the curriculum were effective and which were ineffective, irrelevant or unnecessary in meeting the performance requirements asked of the learners. For example, a validation process would seek to examine whether learners who had completed a curriculum that incorporates a gender perspective throughout actually went on to incorporate a gender perspective in their daily work as was envisioned. If they did, the validation process would seek to establish which parts of the curriculum were most important in achieving this outcome in order to improve efficiency. If not, the process would seek to establish whether the problem lies with what was taught, how it was taught or to whom it was taught. While this process can be highly sensitive and may cause instructors to be defensive, it is important that the professional experience of graduates feeds back into the curriculum development cycle. These good practices and lessons identified can then be shared across the organization and with its strategic partners.⁶

In closing

This handbook began as a collaboration, with the goal of encouraging collaboration on a larger scale. Many of those who have contributed to this project generally work alone on gender-related topics in their institutions. There is no question that many of those engaged in activities aimed at furthering the teaching of gender in the military can be frustrated and disheartened at times, especially as military institutions have such long-standing and seemingly unshakeable cultural practices. There can even be a negative impact on an individual's status and career progression. It is important to remember that many roles within the military are highly specialized and esoteric, and this is one of the reasons why institutional, national, regional and international networks have developed, including the Partnership for Peace Consortium itself. Gender as a theme also lends itself to this kind of collaboration, and, indeed, fostering this kind of network is one of the stated purposes of this handbook. The network that has developed around the creation of this handbook has already proven its worth to its members, not just in the sense of developing capacities and knowledge, but also in terms of providing professional and moral support. With this in mind, we encourage all those who work with this handbook to collaborate with

other like-minded people in their respective institutions, and to reach out to the authors and their various institutions should they need any further assistance. Moreover, we look forward to seeing the pool of experts develop in number, diversity and level of knowledge, and we therefore welcome any comments, criticisms and suggestions on how to build upon the content of this handbook at gender@dcaf.ch.

Notes

1. NATO Public Diplomacy Division, "NATO publishes defence expenditures data for 2014 and estimates for 2015", press release, 22 June 2015, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_120866.htm.
2. See, for example, James Griffith, "Cohesion forgotten? Redux 2011 – Knowns and unknowns", in Mikael Salo and Riso Sinkko (eds), *The Science of Unit Cohesion – Its Characteristics and Impacts* (Tampere: Military Sociological Society of Finland, 2012), pp. 12, 16; Olli Harinen, "Knut Pipping's forgotten study of a WWII infantry company and his results about soldiers' informal group norms", in Mikael Salo and Riso Sinkko (eds), *The Science of Unit Cohesion – Its Characteristics and Impacts* (Tampere: Military Sociological Society of Finland, 2012), p. 70; Mikael Salo, "Import of vertical cohesion and the linking pin function in the military", *Tiede ja ase*, Vol. 66 (2008), p. 54; Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Armed groups and sexual violence: When is wartime rape rare?", *Politics & Society*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2009), pp. 136–142.
3. Wood, *ibid.*, p. 142.
4. UN Security Council, "Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security", UN Doc. No. S/RES/1325 (2000), 31 October 2000.
5. For country-specific information on the existence of national action plans and other relevant activities, see www.peacewomen.org.
6. Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, *Manual of Individual Training and Education, Vol. 8: Validation of Instructional Programmes* (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, 2006), pp. 2, 4, 9–12, 15.