

Book Review: What Works: Gender Equality by Design by Iris Bohnet, 2016, Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, Paperback Edition, Pages 400, INR 599.

Introduction

'What Works: Gender Equality by Design' by Iris Bohnet presents a design and pathway to achieving gender equality in developed countries like the USA as well as developing countries. This book also gives the quantified parameters for designing gender equality and creating smarter evaluation procedures. The analysis made by Iris Bohnet accentuates an interesting feature that gender inequalities are seasonal and depend upon the power of transparency in government policies and democratic behaviour.

The Problem

This book is divided into four parts. The first part analyses the problem and the second part explains ways to design talent management. How to design schools and work, and how to design diversity of women's activities have been explained in the next two parts. As far as the problem is concerned, it is believed that women cannot win because they conform to the feminine stereotype of nurturing and caring for others. Most studies on women observe an inherent socio-culture bias against women in roles dominated by males. Biases about whether or not a person fits matter. In the USA, in the 1970s, only five per cent of musicians performed in the top five orchestras. In the 2020s, their percentage increased to 35, which did not happen by chance. It required deliberate interventions by the major music companies and government policies towards gender equality.

It is tough to de-biasing minds; it requires diversity in training programmes with best practices, leading to moral licensing where people respond to having done something good to women. In India, several experiments were made through exposure to a reality TV show, Satyamev Jayate, hosted by a famous Bollywood star. The programme documented the atrocities and inequalities that lower caste people often

experience. The feedback of this programme is reported to the appreciated by a former Justice of the Supreme Court.

Designing Talent Management

It is highlighted that data or measurement are required to design people's decisions. What does not get measured does not count. Google's experiment measures employees' happiness and makes them more productive (May add details of this experiment).

The gender pay gap is prevalent around the world, although the size of the gap varies by countries, sectors and specific methodology used to access it. The gender pay gap in the US was 21 per cent in 2014. In the European Union, it was 16.4 per cent in 2013, and in Korea (North or South), it was 37 per cent. New Zealand registered 5.6 per cent, the lowest in the developed world.

It is very important to generate data with smarter evaluation procedures. While designing gender equality evaluation procedures, one must follow the following three steps:

1. Dividing the interviewers into different batches with gender equality.
2. Remove demographic information from job applications.
3. Use predictive tests and structured interviews.

While conducting evaluation interviews, one must be careful in appointing the right people with unbiased gender opinions. The language used in the schedule must also reflect gender-unbiased phases.

Designing Training and Implementing:

An important part of women empowerment is teaching them how to be prepared for the job and accept taking risks or avoiding risks. Creating environments inclusive of different risk types is an important part of training. It is important to design environments in which both boys and girls thrive. Implementation of cost-effective and evidence-based interventions based on evidence provided by

different studies conducted on deworming among children in Kenya and India is an example of designing training and work. It is also found that men are willing to take more risks when the risk factors are known and more optimistic when assessing risky situations. Women tend to be overconfident to a lesser degree and, in some instances, even underconfident.

In such situations, we have to use a gender-neutral design, mitigate the impact of gender bias and compensate for differential impacts due to gender bias. It is crucial to create role models for designing gender equality. In some African countries, such experiments were carried out by providing portraits of successful women in politics, industry and public service projects.

It is also important to create crafting groups by combining average ability with complementary diversity of perspectives and expertise to maximise team performance. It is essential to create inclusive group processes to allow diverse perspectives to be contributed and heard.

In order to design a diversity of programmes, many rules serve expressive functions that often go unexamined. They can informally sanction and reward, which in turn, can prove a liability. Replacing old norms with new ones makes others' successes in increasing gender diversity salient (needs a bit more clarity). We can use rules, laws and codes of conduct to express new norms.

While collecting information for measurement, we must use methods to increase transparency in implementation procedures. An increasing number of countries are now using transparent methods to promote gender diversity. The Australian Security Exchange Board asks companies to report their diversity policies and degree of diversity annually. They must report the fraction of female employees

overall and the number of women in senior positions and on a company's Board of Directors. Similarly, in Canada, the Toronto Stock Exchange asks companies to publish women's proportion among general employees as well as management boards. Such information must be salient, simple and comparable.

Designing Change

The entire discussion in the book centres around designing a change in different establishments, particularly in the behavioural design and research-based insights in confidence on "what works". The design of an experiment consists of three parts:

1. Collecting data for quantifying instruments
2. Designing and experimenting with transparency and making it implementable
3. Preparing the route map for the suggested interventions of the experiment

This book suggests four designs:

1. Moving from training to capacity building
2. Moving from intuition to data and creating a structure
3. Moving from an uneven to even playing field
4. Diversity from a number game to the conditions for success.

This book is handy for companies, universities and governments worldwide in their quests to design policies for gender equality, which can help move the needle towards building a fairer and better world.

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