Research Project funded by Scottish Government (2022)

An evidence review of gender equality literature that focused on identifying initiatives and evidence of their effectiveness

6 case studies of UK-based companies in male-dominated industries: aquaculture, construction & engineering

36 stakeholder interviews with managers and women employed in male-dominated occupations within each case study

Collected documents reviewed company policies and accessible administrative data as well as any company information in the public domain

Diversity/Unconscious Bias Training

- Very popular initiative – **not backed by evidence**

- Bezrukova et al. (2016) Meta-analysis, 260 studies into diversity training, range of industries:
  - impact upon cognitive learning (i.e. participants acquired knowledge about diversity issues)
  - But...**no evidence of any lasting impact on attitudes towards diversity**

- Kalev et al. (2006) impact of diversity training on the percentage of women in management roles in 700 organisations in the US: **No evidence of any positive impact**

Diversity/Unconscious Bias Training: Potential Negative Impacts

- Can foster feelings of resentment and resistance towards the minority group (Kalev et al., 2006; Williams et al, 2014; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016)

- Can fueled the idea that women need to change to fit within male-dominated cultures as opposed to the male-dominated cultures needing to change themselves (Williams et al., 2014)

Quotas

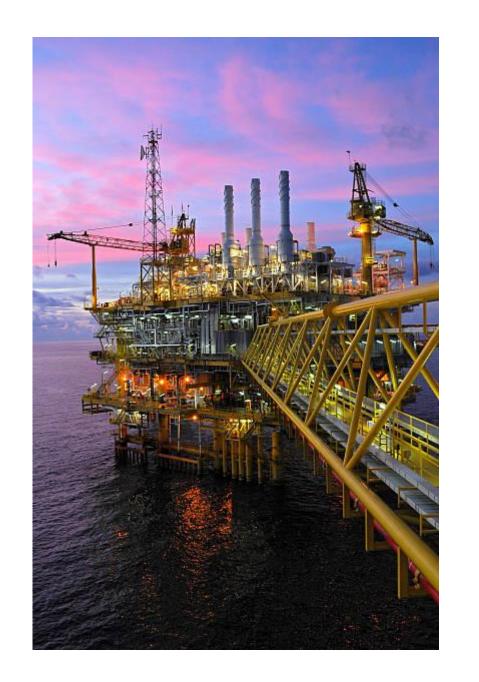- Based on the idea that **'what gets measured, gets managed'**

- **Doesn't resolve underlying cultural issues** within male-dominated sectors which prevent women from progressing and succeeding (Burdett et al., 2021; Galea et al., 2015)

- Often lead to problematic practices such **as positive discrimination** in hiring decisions (Williams et al., 2014)

Affinity Groups

- Limited evidence of these groups making an objective difference in terms of women's success & progression within male dominated sectors (Kalev et al., 2006; Dobbin et al., 2007; Nishii et al. 2017)

- Can reduce feelings of isolation that women may face (Williams et al., 2014; Bridges et al., 2020)

- However, can be challenging for them to create organisational change (Ackrill et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2014)

Affinity Groups:
Oil & Gas Sector Example

"Women's affinity groups are not intended to criticize the corporation but rather to transform women to fit into and succeed in a male-dominated environment.

They may succeed in their goal of making women feel connected and supported by their peers, but our interviews give little evidence that they are effective at altering the male domination of their companies."

(Williams et al., 2014: 464)

Mentoring

- Can reduce feelings of isolation in women working in male-dominated sectors (Kavel et al., 2006; Germain, 2012; Neal-Smith, 2014; Wright, 2016; Jones, 2019).

- Can lead to small improvements in outcomes for women in terms of income & progression & at increasing the number of women in senior leadership positions (Kalev et al., 2006; Dobbin et al., 2007;), although overall, impact is more often found on subjective outcomes such as attitude (Jones 2019).

- Can be challenging to find women in senior positions in male-dominated industries to be mentors

Formal HR Policies

- **Much more promising** - considerable evidence to support the use of formal human resource processes and procedures

- Oversight and accountability are essential

- Policies can potentially have a detrimental impact on gender equality without oversight & accountability

Formal HR Policies: Salary Ranges

Considerable evidence that providing clear information regarding salary ranges available for positions reduces the gap between what men negotiate & what women negotiate.

Without this information the gap is significant between the two groups.

(Bowles et al., 2005; Leibbrandt and List, 2014; Mazei et al., 2015)

Formal HR Policies:
Job Ladders (Dobbins et al., 2015)

- 816 US organisations between 1971 and 2002 (an average of 10 years for each company)

- evidence to support the use of formal job ladders & the practice of advertising all promotion & transfer opportunities internally before going to the external job market.

- Use of job ladders: reduced the % of white men in senior positions while increasing the % of ethnic minority men and some ethnic minority women.

- Use of internal adverts: increased % of women in senior positions (specifically white and Hispanic women).

Flexible Working

Important mechanism through which women (who often shoulder the burden of caring responsibilities) **balance** the demands of work and home life helping them **stay in the labour market** (Maxwell et al., 2007; Chung and van der Horst, 2018; Chung et al., 2021).

For benefits to be realised, organisations, and **supervisors** specifically, need to **embrace and support it** (Blair-Loy and Warton, 2002; Villablanca et al, 2011; Bornstein, 2013).

Flexible Working:
2 Key Recommendations

- Managers and supervisors need comprehensive training in the management of flexible working (Moen et al., 2016; Ropponen et al., 2016).

- The implementation of flexible working policies should be accompanied by a shift away from a culture of long-working hours to a results-based approach (Perlow and Kelly, 2014).

Case Study A

Key Stats

- Infrastructure (rail/ plant/ construction)

- 900 employees (approx)

- 15% women 85% men

- 91 leadership roles/director level roles: 10 are women

- Executive board:

  2 out of 11 are women

Case Study A:
Key Drivers / Challenges

1. Client Expectations

2. Industry Skills Shortage

3. Business Case for Diversity

'How do we get on their tender list? how do we win work from them? You've almost got to mirror how your client looks on a smaller scale.'

'There's also a massive short fall of staff, of potential employees, in the construction industry and you look out the window, even though we've started to move in this direction, it's still mainly blokes out there, so...we're really not tapping into 50% of the potential resource.'

'It's not until you do that bit of research and realise that the benefits of a diverse board and a diverse business right across it that you go – that's actually a much healthier business model, a better place to work and a more productive business as well, more successful, more sustainable.'

Case Study A : Key Actions / Initiatives

- EDI Strategy & Steering Group (representation from all areas/levels of business)

- Branding of EDI Strategy (in line with overall ethos of company)

- Recruitment

- Apprenticeships & Graduate Training Programme

- Mentoring

- STEM Ambassadors

- Parental leave policy

- Language Bank

'The key for me is trying to get more women into the business at graduate or apprentice level, I think it'll be a struggle to try and convince some older people to come into construction, I might be wrong, maybe there is an angle for doing that, but that's certainly where we're getting our success is bringing them in at graduate apprentice and graduate level and hoping that they will then get a love for the sector and the industry and the business and want to stay'.

'Sometimes I'll [people partner] go in with an idea and it's bombed, and it's been for absolutely the right reasons, they [members of the steering group from across the business] know the organisation far better than I do, so it's been really, really, really valuable from that perspective'.

Key Recommendations

- Focus on challenging the problematic cultures themselves

- Adopt inclusive approaches where EDI is everyone's responsibility but especially so for key organisational decision-makers

- Embed EDI into the formal and informal values of the organisation

- Focus on transparency and fairness in the design & implementation of HR policies

- Provide appropriate training to support implementation

- Clear accountability for delivering and overseeing better equality outcomes and active enforcement of gender equality initiatives

- Measure outcomes and impact