

PRINCIPLES FOR A WOMEN'S AGENDA ON TRAINING

We believe it is essential that a transformed training system be guided and governed by principles which ensure that historic patterns of systemic discrimination are eliminated. Women across Canada have started to develop a strong political analysis and a series of demands around issues of training. In working towards a "Women's Agenda on Training" we have been defining specific principles in order to develop a common vision of a comprehensive training strategy.

These principles are Access, Equity, Right to Basic Education, Recognition of Skills, Quality, Accountability, and Integrating Training and Economic Development.

ACCESS:

Access to training is the central issue for women across the country. Women, immigrants, people with all disabilities, refugees, Linguistic and visible minority people and aboriginal people face particular barriers to accessing training and education. It is essential that all groups have equitable access to training and education.

Specific components of an accessible training system, identified by women across the country, are:

1. Access to information
2. Support services
3. Child care
4. Training allowances
5. Expanded eligibility criteria
6. Bridging programmes

EQUITY:

Women see equity as a central principle of a transformed training system. We see equity as ensuring that people receive fair treatment, equal rights, and equal benefits regardless of race, gender, country of origin, class, religion, sexual orientation, geographic location, income, age and ability. Mechanisms must be in place so that we are represented adequately in decision making. In addition, within programmes, systemic barriers must be removed, equity targets established, and a mechanism for monitoring agreed upon.

RIGHT TO BASIC EDUCATION:

Women speak strongly for how any equitable transformation of the training system is hinged on training being recognized as a basic right. Training resources must be directed to general education and skill training programmes which lead to accreditation. In particular, Literacy, language training for people lacking facility in English or French, academic upgrading for people with less than high school completion and bridging programmes for women in all areas including trades and technologies must be priorities. These programmes must be provided as part of a continuum of training to ensure that learners are equipped with portable skills that are broadly recognized by post-secondary educational institutions as well as employers.

RECOGNITION OF SKILLS:

Women's desired direction for change is a model that would permit women with a need and an interest in upgrading, training, or developing skills to do so at various points throughout their working lives. Transferability between various training, with credit given for every step, and career pathing are central to this. Mechanisms are, therefore, needed to ensure that skills acquired and accreditation received are portable and transferable from one level and type of learning and from one location to another. Linkage and laddering criteria in all publicly funded programmes and institutions is required as well. Mechanisms are needed such as Prior Learning Assessment to ensure that skills acquired and accreditation are portable and transferable.

QUALITY:

Women support a view of training that places the learner at the centre of any discussion and sees quality in broader terms than only attaching an individual to the labour market.

Components of a quality training system include:

1. An integrated system
2. Diversity of models
3. Learner centred
4. Curriculum development
5. Counselling
6. Funding of programmes

ACCOUNTABILITY:

Women see accountability as central to a quality and equitable training system that is accessible to all. There is a need for accountability in decision making and representation, where all boards and committees must be held accountable for their activities. There must be accountability in project evaluation and client participation in evaluation and monitoring should be a requirement. There must also be accountability in funding mechanisms where the allocation of resources should be made contingent on demonstrated compliance with all the principles identified above.

INTEGRATING TRAINING AND COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Our communities are facing the devastating effects of economic restructuring, with mass layoffs and increasing unemployment. Women recognise that training alone will not lead to real jobs or economically viable communities. We see a need to integrate training into local economic development plans, creating economic options for women. To do this effectively, however, we must develop new approaches to community economic development and mechanisms for ensuring women's participation in them.