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### **“First we were trained than we trained”**

Hello; this is Emine. I am philosophy teacher. I am married with two children. I have been a member of Eğitim-Sen (Eğitim ve Bilim Emekçileri Sendikası, Education and Science Labourers Trade Union) since 1995. I am a socialist. Beforehand I used to find my place in the leftist movement; I already had a tradition of organizing. Public Employees Trade Unions, were initially set by the militant socialist cadres of the period. It was inevitable for me to be a part of this. I have been active more in the women's studies in the trade union. I also acted as the workplace representative for a long time.

First, we were involved in the foundation of women's commission in the branch. In the beginning we had quite intense conflicts when we were involved in the foundation of women's commission. For example, a male friend from the administration was persistently participating in our meetings. His explanation was funny. Since he positioned himself as the one who knows the best, he said we want to know what you are going to do. He approached us with the male-power. Especially his reaction to feminism was unbelievable. What if we turn out to be feminists. ... Since Public Employees Trade Unions were mixed structures women's separate organizing was met with resistance. Especially male-dominant logic did not change. They reacted with a forceful reflex. They said, you can be feminists outside, but feminist struggle cannot be pursued here. We initially struggled against this resistance. Our studies for March 8 and November 25 were very solid and teaching.

Afterwards we started to discuss mixed trainings, trainings for women's empowerment. I was involved in the project of Training Women Trainers, which we carried out with the Norwegian Education Trade Union. First we were trained; then we offered trainings in a couple of place. I did so in İstanbul and Ankara. We were trying to empower ourselves as women; at the same time we were trying to ensure consciousness transformation in men. During Elif's term we started to score some achievements. Women's secretariats, women's commissions, quotas were started to take hold in many places. But later, we started to see that these unfolded into something different. In the initial discussions, Serpil Sancar was always putting a question mark. Do not absolutize anything. Quota included. She said that quota, and representation in governing, and struggle, all had to be adopted to the existing conditions and state of affairs. I think that we experienced this in the last period. The male dominant mentality that had once presented much reflex tried to lock us to a narrow space later on. Women's demands were not included among the general demands of the organization.

For example, the daycare problem was perceived as solely the woman's problem. It was not included among the general policies of the organization. This struggle was relegated to women. That process was

troublesome. You had struggle for a certain period of time. You asked for quotas; for Women's Secretariat; you got these. But then you turned out to be more invisible. In the beginning of the struggle you were at least fighting, getting into conflict; it had a response. Invisibility is worse.

I think Eđitim-Sen's activities related to gender in the educational sphere created waves. I believe, our brochures, the statements we issued every March 8, every November 25, our gender training created transformation. As the Central Women's Secretariat we had gender trainings in a couple of schools in Ankara.

We conducted mixed gender trainings, in which workplace representatives in Batıkent participated. One thing I never forget is that a friend from the University's Women's Studies was lecturing about gender in education. In the part on preferred toys many of the teachers in the seminar hall said that they would feel uncomfortable with their sons playing with dolls. Trainings were very effective. Many friends expressed this at the end of the trainings. In that process I realized that I had been lecturing on philosophy but I never mentioned women philosophers. Those trainings were significant on my part, too. Afterwards, I prepared both slide presentation and material for the journal. Every year, especially in the week of March 8, I organize events related to women philosophers. A friend who is specialized on literature, had noted that she never had such perspective and then had done some works on this topic. In this respect, we could convey this gender perspective to the teachers in many schools in Batıkent.

That is why I think that the women's studies in the trade union is very significant both for the transformation of gender perception and for the acquisition of women's viewpoints.

How did I schedule my everyday life? Günümlü nasıl örgütlüyordum? I had two kids. How did we handle? Certainly with women's solidarity. We were three women. Three women, our kids had one year between each other. And we, three women, cared for the kids together. They were also members of the trade union. We shared the responsibilities, so our lives were not affected. Our kids were happy to be together.

Press declarations in Kızılay, demonstrations, all night long activities were relatively more militant in the beginning. We organized a demonstration in Kızılay where we slept at night there. We had this motivation of "We are right" in that demonstration. I remember, I had not fear at all. It is one of the most precious memories that I will now tell to my children. We had this belief in that we were right. And there was the power of being together. It was a beautiful event.

Especially, after the law was enacted the activities turned into mostly press declarations, negotiated, agreed activities. In the earlier periods, in the case of disagreements we would be involved in de facto

activities. We would not opt for permission. Those were more radical activities. Before the actions in the period, which we called de facto and legitimate trade union activism we visited many schools. I remember: in the school visits we did not demand anything from the trade union. We paid the gas expenses on our own. In that period, I used to visit the schools on my car. We would talk. We did not have reservations when calling the people in the schools into action about whether there arises a problem during the event, concerns about their safety and attack by the police forces. For, we had this high motivation that we were right and powerful, springing from the de facto and legitimate trade union perspective.

In the following process, after the enactment of the law our activities changed, so did our perception. For example, in our demonstrations related to 4+4+4, I realized the transformation in our perception when they attacked us in front of the YKM. We went to the demonstrations as if we were going to the Gezi demonstrations. We are teachers, we are privileged, no one can lay a hand on us. From the understanding that police forces attack, use batons, and we run away, we reached to the understanding that we are the teachers. The legal process shaped not only organized activity, but also the consciousness.

I participated in Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayları (Democratic Education Conventions, DEK). I participated in two DEKs. In one of them I was involved in the women's issues. In the other one I was in the commission on ethics in philosophy education, professional ethics.

I participated in Women's Conventions. Hatice organized the first KESK (Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, Confederation of Public Employees Trade Unions) Women's Convention; she was the first Women's Secretary. As members of Eğitim-Sen we worked in Women's Conventions, too. I presented on quota.

I think that no other secretariat works as active and dynamic as the women's secretariats. Perhaps education secretariats approximate to that; but women put so many words, organized so many demonstrations, they ensured that many demands are embraced; and put their marks on many achievements. Pants demonstrations is one of those; or our demonstrations for daycare and the like. Even the Ministry accepted the studies on Gender in Education. The fact that the Ministry started to offer gender trainings in its in-service trainings means that our works had an effect on them. For, it was through us that these trainings were integrated into the agenda of the Ministry.

In the demonstrations in the first period "We are the KESK" slogan was chanted from the heart. Because we felt that way. For sure, I know I chanted the slogan feeling it deep down. I am organized and my organization is the KESK.

For me being a member of the KESK was being together with women. For, I felt this stronger since I was involved in the women's movement and in the KESK's women's studies. I felt strong when I was with my women friends. Being a member of Eğitim-Sen, of KESK meant being together with women. We, as women friends stood side by side in the demonstrations. It made us feel stronger to be with women in the demonstrations.

Even if I was in a mixed venue, I would go to where women friends were and feel that demonstrations deep down to my bones. This was the case for me. I could feel the essence of the demonstration. The demonstration would take a finer face by the slogans, the humour we shared, with the halays. After the demonstration we would not go home before we drank beer together. We lived all these with our women friends. Women's studies brought us together, and now, for example, it is Yaşar, Nurşen, Canan, we still continue to relate to each other. We are still powerful together; we found each other in these venues. Out of the women's studies we have this magnificent women's solidarity.

I think that women talked enough in the women's studies, held within the scope of trade unions; besides they had done whatever had to be done. I think we have been effective in general. But I am not sure whether we could transform our trade unions.

As women we could not overcome group belongingness in macro politics. We were successful in the workplaces. We were successful in our personal lives. We were successful in our actions. But we were not successful in the power struggle. We could not carry women's solidarity to power. It is as if we were not successful in harassment issues, either. There, too, groups and group belongings overwhelmed.

Nevertheless, women's studies in the trade unions were important both personally and in terms of its contribution to the women's movement. For example, I descend from a male dominant politics. My encounters with the women's movement, meeting with women, forming that solidarity bond with women, finding myself were all possible through the women's studies. I became a feminist in this process, bit by bit, settling all in. It had a great contribution to women's movement, to feminist struggle, in terms of self-transformation and transformation and empowerment.