Advancing Equity in Relational Public Service

While relational practices, which are at the heart of public service reform ideas like Human Learning Systems, are well-positioned to promote equity, they do not automatically enable equitable outcomes.

Without explicitly naming and addressing equity, even the most well-intentioned relational work can reproduce existing power imbalances. **Equity needs to be an embedded, conscious consideration throughout.** Ensuring equity requires deliberate, intentional practice around a clear purpose, promoting social justice.

Meaningful, equity-centred work requires the following enabling conditions:

Commitment to ongoing work
Embedding equity is not a one-off project, it's a continuous commitment. It's vital to consider how to sustain this work across leadership changes, funding cycles or shifting political climates, as well as building accountability structures to ensure equity remains at the centre.

Intentional pursuit of equity
Equity must be intentional at multiple levels, from interpersonal relationships to organisational cultures to policy frameworks. Without an explicit commitment or deliberate design and practices, systems might default to reproducing the status quo.

Understanding historical context
Without this grounding, there's a risk of overlooking the deep-rooted factors that shape current dynamics. Equitable working requires confronting the historical roots of structural inequity.

Equity as collective gain
Equity isn't just about addressing disparities for some, it's about creating a system where everyone benefits from fairness, inclusion and shared power.

Challenging anti-equity narratives
It's important to name and challenge the narratives that undermine equity. Building shared political education across teams, organisations and communities is critical to counteracting these narratives.

Recognising positionality
Acknowledging this is an important precondition for collective system understanding. Everyone comes to the work with their own positionality, shaped by race, gender, class, ability, institutional roles and lived experiences.

ThemPra Social Pedagogy
Community Interest Company

collaborate
for social change

HUMAN
LEARNING SYSTEMS
HUMAN · LEARNING · SYSTEMS

Key Insights

The insights shared here are drawn from examples of the practice of <u>Human Learning Systems.</u> **We've identified a set of key insights to guide your approach to equity and practices that help advance equity in relational public services.** These show up often, sometimes at multiple stages, sometimes more intensively at particular moments. It's important to remember that systems are dynamic and evolving, and contexts are diverse, so practices and approaches will also shift and evolve over time and place.

For more ideas about how to bring these equity insights into your practice, please listen to our podcast series and read our report.

1
Structural inequities and systemic change
True equity requires addressing the deep structural roots of inequity, not just surface-level solutions.

2
Power dynamics
Power shapes every part of the system, from decision-making to resource flows to whose knowledge is included and valued.

3
Community and lived experience as core
Community knowledge and lived experience are not just helpful inputs, they are core assets for systems change.

4
Emergent working and trust building
In inequitable systems, certainty is risky and fixed agendas can reinforce exclusion and power.

5
Justice in learning conditions
Creating equitable learning systems means addressing who defines knowledge and who benefits from learning.

6
Reflective practice and humility
Equitable working requires critical self-awareness and openness, especially for professionals and leaders in the system.

7
Emotions and care in the work
Equity work is emotional work; the human dimensions of joy, care, empathy and connection cannot be neglected.

8
Sustainability and capacity-building
Equity-focused systems need to be designed for long-term sustainability, not just short-term interventions.

Further resources:

🎙 <u>Changing the Narrative Podcast Series</u>

📖 <u>From Implicit to Intentional: Advancing Equity in Human Learning Systems Insights Report</u>

ThemPra Social Pedagogy
Community Interest Company

collaborate
for social change

HUMAN
LEARNING SYSTEMS