

How much gender equality policies fit into the university? A case study from Germany.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This paper summarizes results of two empirical studies undertaken at the University of Wuppertal in Germany. In a qualitative survey utterances of future professors about their personal ideas on realizing gender equality at the university were recorded and analyzed. Supplementary results of a just closed quantitative survey give information about scientific staff members general attitudes towards gender equality and their perceived experiences regarding promotion practices, sexism and leadership culture. Over all the results show, that on both levels, the professoral and staff member level, equality policy is widely accepted, but when it comes to practical equality measures, there are still strong reservations.

2 FRAMEWORK

Besides information on the project related background of the mentioned studies, also the legal federal framework relevant for institutions of higher education located in North Rhine-Westphalia is shortly explained. Additionally the gender equality policy of the University of Wuppertal and its related gender consulting in appointment procedures is highlighted for gaining a better understanding of the institutional setting where both studies were conducted.

2.1 Project background

The research is embedded the frame of the GenderTIME¹ – ,Transferring Implementing Monitoring Equality‘ project, which is currently funded by the European Commission within the 7th Framework Programme. Aim of the project is it to identify and implement the best systematic approaches for increasing the participation and career advancement of women researchers in selected participating institutions. These institutions vary a lot in terms of their size, disciplinary focus, institutional culture and history, which at the end will allow drawing conclusions for successful gender equality management in different organizational settings. As common strategy each institution developed

¹ Consortium members are: Egalité des Chances dans les Etudes et la Profession d’Ingénieur en Europe, France (coordination); Interuniversitaeres Forschungszentrum für Technik, Arbeit und Kultur, Austria; Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy; Université Paris Est Créteil, France; Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany; Loughborough University, United Kingdom; Fundacion TECNALIA Research & Innovation; Spain). More information on: www.gendertime.org.

tailor-made ‘Action Plans’ including measures or activities in diverse areas like career progression, work-life-balance, salary monitoring etc.

2.2 Structural federal framework

The debate about the importance of gender in organizations is discussed intensively since the early nineties in the German women's and gender studies. It was and is about to make gender inequalities visible in the process of integrating women in the labor market.

According to these analyzes, organizations are influenced by the gender specific division of labor as a result women remain largely excluded of prestigious, well-paid, powerful professional positions (Wilz 2013). In North Rhine-Westphalia equality policy is now firmly institutionalized (the Federal Equality Act / Law came into force in 1995) and aims at resolving career barriers for women, for example through the promotion of women in higher education and research.

Nevertheless, gender has not lost its importance as an organizing agent in the scientific career. The Gender Report 2013 shows that higher education and research in the Federal Republic and also in North Rhine-Westphalia are actually still far away of being gender equal.

Table 1: Professors at Higher Education institutions in North Rhine-Westphalia 2012

Type of HE institution	Women	in %	Men	in %	Total
all	1584	20,6	6107	79,4	7691
Universities	958	20,7	3671	79,3	4629
Universities of Applied Sciences	530	20,0	2123	80,1	2656
Art academies	96	23,7	310	76,4	406

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At the University of Wuppertal the proportion of women on the professor level lies with 23,8 % above the average compared to 20,7 % at all North Rhine-Westphalian universities (see table 1), even though the number is still low.

The position of being over averaged represented does not count for the proportion of female academic staff members at the University of Wuppertal. Currently 35,1 % of all scientific personnel is female, which means that Wuppertal lies with 5,6 % behind the average university in North Rhine-Westphalia (see table 2).

Table 2: Scientific employees at Higher Education institutions in North Rhine-Westphalia 2012

Type of HE institution	Women	in %	Men	in %	Total
all	14609	40,4	21540	59,6	36149
Universities	13338	40,7	19460	59,3	32798
Universities of Applied Sciences	1189	37,5	1985	62,5	3174
Art academies	82	46,3	95	53,7	177

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Although the proportion of women has increased steadily at all qualification and hierarchy levels in the past 30 years, but in top positions, as rectors, presidents or deans, women are still a rarity, and at universities women remain the minority in professorial positions. In the light of still missing organisational change processes, the effectiveness of equality policies is assessed more and more sceptical. Thus, Wetterer (2002) pointed out that behind equality strategies often only a kind of "rhetorical modernization" stands.

2.3 The gender equality strategy of the “Gender-Consulting” at the University of Wuppertal

At the University of Wuppertal gender equality is practiced as a "top-down" strategy, measures for the advancement of women are taken and implemented at the level of the Rectorate. The Equal Opportunity Office as executive organizational unit is directly subordinated to the Rector. Gender Equality between women and men is announced in the mission statement of the university. This accentuation is communicated both internally and externally. For each job vacancy for a professorship it is noted that gender competence is a requirement for the candidates. Literally it reads:

"The University of Wuppertal considers the equality of women and men as an important task. The future post holder will be involved in its implementation."

For this reason the University Wuppertal is looking for each vacant professorship for scientists who are willing to commit gender equality. To support this application process the University follows since 2009 a so called gender consulting strategy in appointment procedures. A gender expert advises the members of appointment committee in the development of subject-specific concretization of gender competence and accompanies the entire process.

However, recent organizational sociologic research indicates boundaries of the so-called top-down strategy. Thus, with rules which are imposed "from above" universities run the risk that they will be „abducted“ or exploited as other bureaucratic regulations "so that their effects can pervert" (Kirsch-Auwärter 2013). Therefore, micro-organizational sociological concepts emphasize the central role of institutional-specific negotiation and decision-making processes (Ortmann et al. 1990) and deal with

the "obstinacy of the subjects" (Türk 1989). Micro-political analyzes illustrate that rules in organizations require a minimum of consensus of all. From this perspective the success of equality also depends on the extent to which the under-representation of women is recognized as a problem and whether gender equality policy is accepted.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative part - The question of gender competence

Since the gender competence often cannot be seen in the scientific biography, it has proven as useful to discuss the aspect of gender equality in the job application interview. From the side of the Appointment Committee members the candidates were specifically asked what ideas, experiences and plans they would have to bring equality between women and men forward at the university.

In the discussions it became clear that the candidates only rarely have a competence in the sense of a clear categorizeable expertise; rather the variety of opinions and views on gender inequality and gender equality policy came to light. Resulting from this inspection, the idea arose to monitor the responses and then analyze them which conceptions of gender equality or inequality is to be found in the new generation of scientists and how far they are ready for equality policy.

The data of the first study was gathered from 2009 to 2011 in 50 appointment procedures with candidates for future professorships. They were analyzed through the method of circular deconstruction (Jaeggi et al. 1998). This method is very suitable for communicative acquired data and smaller research projects. Some elements are similar to the Grounded Theory (Strauss & Glaser 1967) there are also references to the research workshop (Breuer 1996). The circular Deconstruction has no linear phase sequence of collection, analysis, presentation of results but revolves in these phases. This qualitative research method has the goal to reconstruct the latent meaning of the collected material. Guided by theory and intuition the empirical material is abstracted in the first evaluation phase in six steps of analysis to central categories. In the second evaluation stage, it is condensed in three additional analytical steps to the central sociological construct. 175 responses were subjected to this evaluation method.

3.2 Quantitative part – Culture staff survey

The second, quantitative study is the so called "Culture staff survey", a tested tool designed by the Athena SWAN Charta². The survey was originally designed for departments in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) for providing them a tool to assess how staff members experience their work environment regarding gender equality aspects. For the GenderTIME purpose we adapted the questionnaire to each institutional and national context. The German final version included 34 questions, focusing on four main areas:

1. Participation and promotion practices
2. Workplace culture
3. Leadership and management commitment

² The Athena Swan Charta has been developed by the Equality Challenge Unit in the UK, with the aim to encourage and recognise commitment to combating women's underrepresentation STEMM (science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine) and advancing the careers of women in these fields. See <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charter-marks/athena-swain/> (30.7.2014)

4. Institutional reputation and social responsibility

The survey was launched online in 6 partner institutions in the GenderTime project, here only the results of the German study are included. The questionnaire consisted out of closed questions with open answer possibilities for remarks or additional explanations. A five-point Likert scale was applied for the answer categories.

4 RESULTS

Following the results of the qualitative survey in appointment procedures committees and the quantitative culture staff survey will be presented separately. An attempt to combine both results will be undertaken in the concluding chapter.

4.1 Results – Appointment Committees

The results presented here are very strongly bound in their significance to the constellation in which they were collected. The respondents are in a highly exposed and therefore emotionally extraordinary situation. This was certainly true on candidates who had already applied for a professorship for several times. Nevertheless, the models provide a first insight into the acceptance of gender equality and the awareness about gender inequality in the next generation of professors.

The analysis has shown that Gender inequality as topic and gender equality policy as strategy is present to two thirds of the asked persons. But one third tells that they neither thought about inequality, nor were they engaged in gender equality policy. The reason is that this group of people has either not perceived gender inequality or negates the topic consciously. This shows, for example, the following response. “I would not take account of gender aspects that would be unprofessional. I do not see the problem.”

On closer examination the willingness to be political active for gender equality focuses on three measures: Gender in-equality in teaching and research, supporting measures for achieving the compatibility of family and career and Gender-sensitive student recruitment.

1. Most aspiring professors teach gender-sensitive. After their experience female students are indeed more diligent and performance-oriented than male students, but need more encouragement and direct approach. Conversely, male students must be encouraged to fill their comments with thematically relevant content, and to work more carefully. Respondents are also willing to take gender inequality as an issue in teaching and research. However, they gave no information whether they question their own institution in a critical reflected way.
2. Promoting the compatibility of scientific career and family is in Germany currently very prominent topic in the media and political agenda. The compatibility is also important for the new generation of professors. Some of them know the problem from their own scientific career. But compatibility is more a family policy than a gender equality measure and affects both women and men. This is indicated in a study by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research from 2013³.

³ http://www.bmbf.de/pub/kinder_wunsch_und_wirklichkeit.pdf

3. An accepted and practiced form of gender policies takes place at the interface between school-university. The scientists are ready to go to school and to advertise in gender-sensitive manner their professions. This practice of student recruitment is located especially in the STEM subjects.

On closer inspection it becomes clear that gender equality policy for the new generation of scientists is limited to the study phase. Tools and strategies that have been related to scientific staff were rarely discussed by the respondents, this included: Motivation to publish and present papers; invitation to pursue a PhD; information on mentoring programs and programs for women returnees.

However, these support measures were focused exclusively to the promotion phase, but not for the post-doctoral phase. The quota for women as a management tool to eliminate gender inequality in science was only once mentioned positively.

4.2 Results – Culture Staff Survey

The survey was closed on 28.7.2014. The analysis is right now rough and not gender segregated. The project partners responsible for setting up the online survey are currently working on an online statistical tool, which will allow retrieving the data gender segregated. We hope that this is the case until the Vienna conference.

The analyzed data will be presented here according to the above mentioned four thematic areas of the questionnaire.

Demographic data

In total 190 scientific staff members answered the online questionnaire, which equals a response rate of 22,3 %. The majority of respondents belong to STEM departments like mathematics and natural sciences (21,6 %) and architecture, civil engineering, mechanical engineering and safety engineering (20 %). This was already a quite astonishing result as we did not anticipate this high participation from STEM related fields in a survey, which deals with gender equality. 75,6 % of the participants have currently fixed term contracts, which reflect the high amount of precarious working models at the organization. Only 21 % of all scientific staff members are permanently employed and within this category men are overrepresented with 69 % versus 31 % of women. And out of the group of 79 % temporary staff members 94 % have however a contract with less than 3 years duration (vgl. Info des PR-Wiss, BUW 2013). Which implies that private, professional and financial situation is extremely insecure as well as not predictable for the scientists and researchers.

The gender distribution shows that 55,8 % of the respondents identify as female, 40,5 % as male. Three persons chose the third given category 'other' for themselves. Younger staff members were more likely to answer the survey questionnaire compared to older ones, which can be explained by the fact that their professional future is partly still in the making, they have to face to a larger extent insecurities like mentioned above and therefore it could be that they are more interested in stating their opinions about work place culture. 55,8 % of the respondents are between 26 and 34 years old, 25,8 % between 35 and 44. Out of the 190 persons, who answered the questionnaire, 28,4 % have responsibilities for children under 18 years, and only 10,5 % of all respondents have been on parental leave during their employment at the university.

Participation and promotion practices

The answers for this section of questions reflect an overall satisfaction with participation and promotion practices among the scientific staff members. Thus 81,6 % agree that in their work environment are treated on their merits irrespective of their gender, which for instance includes that both women and men are actively encouraged to apply for promotion and take up training opportunities. Additionally 70,5 % report that work is allocated on a fair and clear basis in their departments. But for 17,9 % this allocation is not comprehensible all the time as they did not agree to this question. Generally nearly three-quarters (74,7 %) of all respondents think that in their work environment the full range of an individual's skills and experience are valued (14,7 % disagreement).

Asked, to extend certain skills and experiences are valued in their working environment, the results show that research experience with 68,9 % is highest valued, followed by communication competencies (53,9 %) and capacity for team work (52,1 %). Mobility, networking capacities and teaching are of average importance.

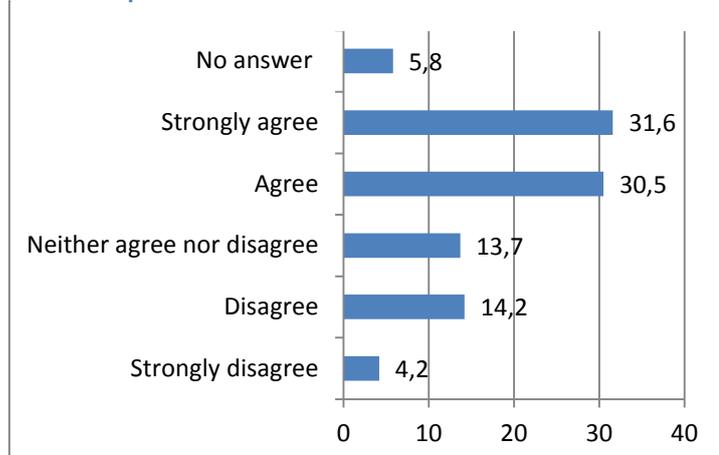
The question on transparency of promotion processes and criteria reveals a major problem of professional careers in academia, namely that these are not transparent and comprehensible to most of the staff members. While 51,6 % of the respondents agreed that it is clear to them what counts to be promoted, 23,7 % disagreed and 17,9 % chose 'neither / nor' as answer category, which reflects a certain uncertainty . Above most superiors fail in actively encouraging their staff members in taking up career development opportunities like further training. 37,3 % of the participants didn't feel supported by their superiors concerning this matter, 40,6 % did.

Interesting is also, that 23,7 % of the sample report not being provided with sufficient feedback on their work and above another 23,7 % of the staff members couldn't asses if they get enough feedback and chose the 'neither / nor' answer category.

Workplace culture

The survey section about workplace culture included questions about whether sexist or unsupportive language and behavior are accepted at the workplace, which 62,1 % of the respondents denied but still 18,4 % agreed to the fact that condescending or intimidating language, ridicule, overly familiar behaviour, jokes/banter that stereotype women or men or focus on their appearance are accepted in their department (see table 3). The rejection of sexist unsupportive language and behavior is above average; even clearer is the rejection of sexist images: 78,4% of respondents feel sexualized images (such as calendars, magazines, on computers or mobile phones) as unacceptable.

Table 3: Unsupportive language and behavior in the department is not accepted in %

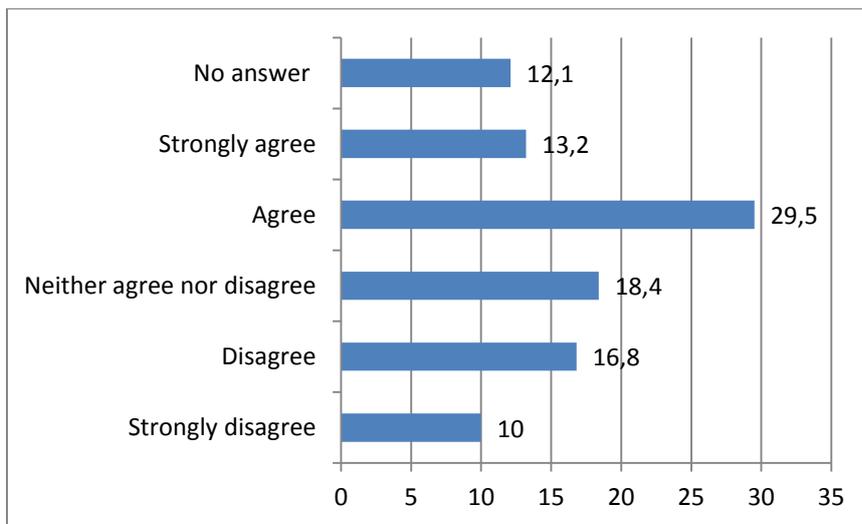


of respondents feel sexualized images (such as calendars, magazines, on computers or mobile phones) as unacceptable.

Leadership and management commitment

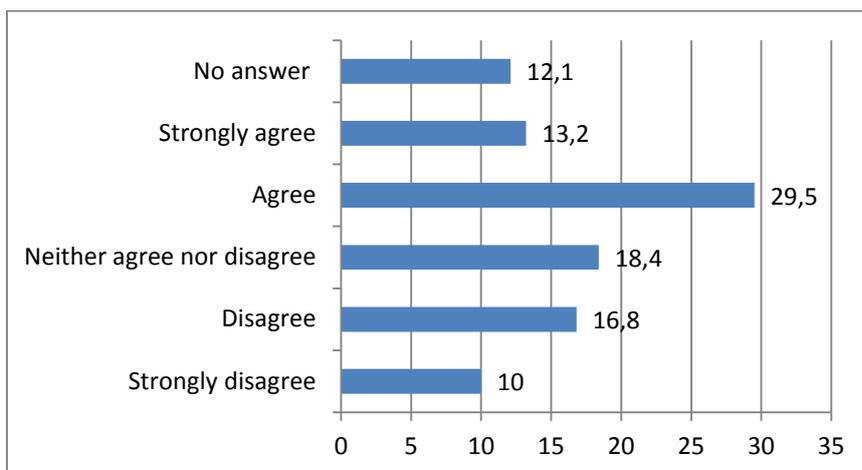
The question about possible experienced situations, where respondents felt uncomfortable because of their gender was negated by totally 75,9 %. But also 13,1 % of men and women agreed to this question (see table 4). Interestingly, this question was the one with the highest amount (25 in total) of open answers. A female post-doc described that she felt uncomfortable in situations where promotion of staff members was discussed: “Chairs are taken granted for men, while women are more likely to remain in research projects. Promotion of women happens only when they show some kind of ‘adapted behaviour’”.

Table 4: During my time in this department, I have experienced situation(s) where I have felt uncomfortable because of my gender



A huge majority of 75,8 % of all responding staff members agrees that it is clear to them, what policies their department in relation to gender equality follows (table 5). As examples discrimination, parental leave, career’s leave or flexible working were named. 9,5 % stated that it is not clear for them, while 11,6 % selected ‘neither / nor’ as best answer option.

Table 5: My department has made it clear to me that it advocates gender equality



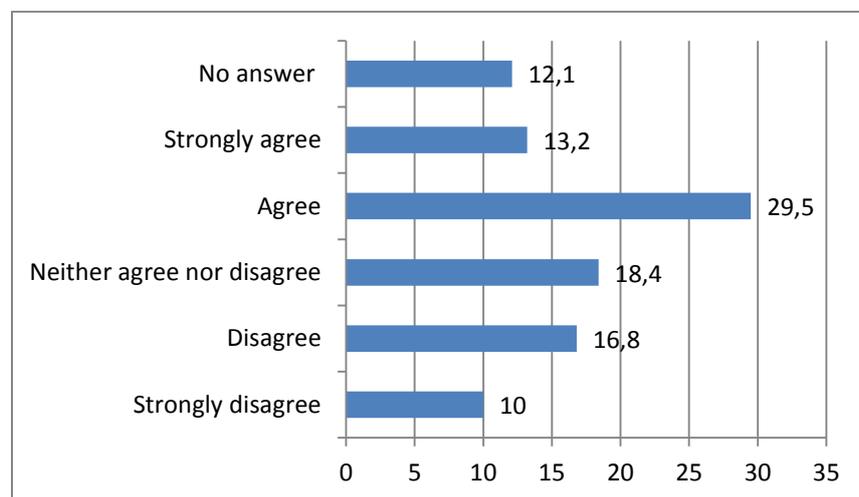
If we now have a look at a connected question, which deals with the fact whether the participants understand and share why positive action may be required to promote gender equality at the university, the result are not as positive. More than half agree or strongly agree that gender equality measures are necessary, and 5,2 % disagree. The amount of non-supporters is rather low, but 17,4 %

neither agree nor disagree, means they don't take up a clear position and another 24,2 % simply did not answer this question. This is the second⁴ highest amount of no answers in this survey. This shows that although the superior and/or department makes clear that gender equality is an issue for them, resistances still are visible on an individual level.

Institutional reputation and social responsibility

Another point which is important in the just discussed context is the information policy of the department regarding gender equality matters that could affect staff members (see table 6). 42,7 % of the respondents agree, which can be interpreted that they feel good informed, while 26,8 % don't feel well informed by their department about gender equality policies at the university. As examples university internal instruments and documents like the Gender Equality Plan of the Department, the Gender Concept of the university or Gender Equality legislation were mentioned. Striking again is the high number of "neither/nor" and "no answers" with 18,4 % and 12,1 %.

Table 6: I am kept informed by my department about gender equality matters that affect me



Over three-quarters (76,3 %) of the sample agree on the statement that their work environment uses women as well as men as visible role models, for instances in staff inductions, as speakers at conferences, or at recruitment events.

Is the respective department of the respondents a great place to work for men, women and other genders? For men the it is assessed as a slightly better workplace with 83,7 % compared to 78,9 % for women. For other genders only 45,3 % of staff members would see the department as a great working environment. This certainly is an interesting result. And as already mentioned, 37,9 % did not answer this question related to other genders.

The presented results of the staff survey are a first attempt to understand how individuals at our university perceive their working environment. During 2014 and beginning of 2015 supplementary

⁴ The highest amount of ,no answers' selections is related to a question, whether the department is a great place to work for other genders with 37,9 %.

qualitative investigations will be carried out with staff members and professors for having a more close look at these questions.

5 CONCLUSIONS

For the majority of scientific workers at BUW gender justice is a recognized target and sexism is considered unacceptable. The majority has the impression to be assessed and treated on the basis of their own performance. Therefore the sex does not play a significant role. The attitude to gender equality policy is ambivalent; this is particularly evident when it comes to concrete measures. Perhaps this is an indication that the acceptance of gender equality is only a “rhetorical modernization”⁵ or it is related to the non-permanent employment situations. It would be possible that the high turnover of scientific employees at the university, especially in the category of junior researchers, leads to a lack of institutional identification and integration.

The new generation of professors lacks a systematic overview for promoting women scientists and researchers. They don't have an overview of the variety of measures to foster gender equality. Pointedly, one can say: “Anyone muddles along in their corner!”. The Gender Equality Office is not perceived as consulting offer. May be the lack of information is linked to the lack of institutional integration of young scientists. In Germany the situation of scientists is extremely precarious; labor contracts with a term of less than one year are not uncommon.

The new generation of professors limits gender equality policy on study phase. Need of gender equality measures during or after PhD phase is not prevalent. Possibly this is related to the scientific concept of performance. In the traditional idea of a scientific career, above all, one's own scientific performance counts. The scientific career is therefore apparently completely free of power, strategy, personal dependence and obligations and the academic qualification is the power of a "lone warrior". Thus the scientific career is not the result of teamwork, family support, collegial discussions and the support given by the doctor mother / doctor father. If one thinks this traditional perspective to its logical conclusion, then the over-representation of male professors is a result of their unique high performance, due to which they are derived mainly from the scientific mechanism of selection as a winner. Equality policy undermined this elitist selection. After all, the best performers don't need support, but any promotion policy discredited their personal excellence. This question and to what extent the traditional concept of performance among young scientists plays a role will be investigate in an additional research step.

⁵ Wetter (2002)

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