

# Creating change at organisational level: What makes the difference?

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# Structure of presentation

- 1) Change is possible: examples
- 2) Factors involved in creating change
  - Leadership as key
- 3) What is success??

# Change is possible....

Increase in proportion of women at (full) professorial level: from

- Zero (1997); to 34% (2012)
  - University of Limerick: O'Connor 2017a
- 16% (1994-95) to 32% (2009-10)
  - Istanbul Technical University: Saglamer et al, 2013
- These challenge the idea that the under-representation of women in such positions is 'natural' and 'inevitable' (EU: average=21%)

# ‘Best Practice’: Trends

- Those that exemplified some gender ‘best practice’ (White and O’Connor, 2017)
  - Women make up roughly **40%** of senior management\* in such universities in Austrian, New Zealand, Swedish, South African, Indian and UAE case studies
    - \* Typically including at least Presidents & Vice Presidents
  - Women make up roughly **30%** of full professors in such universities in Australian, Irish, Indian, New Zealand, Swedish, South African, Turkish, United Arab Emirates ones
    - European Union average is 21% (EU, 2016)

## 2) Factors?? Leadership...

- As ‘a process of influence’ (Gunter, 2010)
  - ‘Bottom up’: informal gender champions
  - ‘Top down’: formal positions of power
  - ‘Brought in’: External credible experts
    - Leadership: In a particular organisational and national context, with implications as regards timing, chance... (Gabriel et al, 2014)
- Multifactorial, contextual explanation...

# Informal gender champions: strategies

- Using opportunities (Universities Act 1997)
- ‘Perverse alignments’ (Newman, 2010) e.g.
  - Feminists and managerial Human Resources
- Legitimation: stakeholder involvement e.g.
  - Prestigious research funding (e.g. SFI)
- Managing management (‘framing’ issues)
- ‘Provocative misbehaviour’ (direct action)
- Mobilizing ties across universities
  - O’Connor, 2017b

# Formal leadership

- Structure, culture, policies and processes
- Responding to external challenges e.g.
  - Tender for community based medical school
- Responding to informal champions e.g.
  - Gender awareness training for Exec in 1998..
- Making 'unusual appointments'
- Publicly legitimating a gender agenda
- Specific initiatives (e.g. Athena Swan)

# Both kinds of leadership...

- Important in challenging the idea that
  - ‘The problem is women’
    - Gender ‘works’ at an individual level but ....
- Affecting the way gender ‘works’ at
  - Interactional level
  - Organisational level- especially culture
    - Formal leadership; most important for
      - Structures, procedures, processes
- Systemic level: nationally, internationally



# Gender: Interactional level

- Senior management women saw their male colleagues perception of them as
  - disruptive, confrontational, dissenting, frightening, intimidating ('out of place'??)
    - 'too questioning; too challenging, asking uncomfortable questions'
      - Resonances of Kanter's 1977 'iron maiden archetype'
      - Similar to Husu's in Finland; Montes Lopez in Spain
      - Senior Management is a male area with power...
- Female colleagues perceptions: positive

# Gender: Organisational Level

## Structure and procedures

- Not always open competition: van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Nielsen, 2015
- Words in ads; internal (male?) lobbying
- Differential career opportunities e.g.
  - More Chairs in male dominated areas
  - Workload allocation
    - Women: Often less opportunity for profiling; higher teaching & pastoral work

# Gender: Organisational Level

- Cultures: unhelpful or unfriendly to women
  - Double standards (Moss-Racusin et al, 2012; Wenneras & Wold 1997);
    - Still a problem even in Sweden: Ahlquist et al 2014
    - Differential evaluation of men and women
      - Connell (1987) 'patriarchal dividend'; Bourdieu (2001) 'negative symbolic coefficient'; Frazer (2008) 'misrecognition'; Golden & Rouse: Orchestra example...
  - Excellence: 'an idealised cultural construct': 'a macro-cultural myth' (Nielsen, 2016)
    - Evaluations involve a social process: gender is a social reality so..(Lamont, 09; O'Connor & O'Hagan 2015)

# 3) Indicators of success??

- Gender balance: senior management, profs
- Tackling perpetuation of gender inequality
  - Through horizontal segregation
  - Gender not integrated into values & interests of key stakeholders; into educational purpose
  - Structure, culture, procedures, processes
    - Space & discipline: underpin male power so...
      - Peterson, 2017
  - ‘Othering interactions’ and binary choices
  - Macho-leadership (instead of Feminist)

O’Connor, 2017b

# Summary....

- Examples: Limited success in an intractable area- (full) professoriate
  - Challenge idea that ‘problem is women’
  - ‘Best practice’ trends: 40% of senior management and 30% of profs were women
- Explanation?
  - Multi-factorial but leadership is key
- Change is possible...
  - But change is neither total nor permanent..

# THANK YOU!

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