How to overcome resistance to change: Women in HE leadership case study

Dr. Gita Revalde, Riga Technical university
Riga, Latvia
gitar@latnet.lv

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Recent challenges for HE leaders – structural reforms

- Structural changes in national HE landscape:
  Demand to decrease the number of HE institutions

- Internal (university level) reforms:
  - Due to the increasing demand from society and ministries to increase the quality, accountability and to introduce output/performance based operation instead of academic self-governance
  - Changes in state policy – introducing performance based funding
  - National level evaluation of research performance – necessity to re-structure units with low outputs and research performance
  - Internationalization (including student and staff mobility) – need to introduce English in all study programmes

GE question is not in the agenda
Women in academic positions: case of Latvia

2013/2014 Latvia

Percentage of women in HE positions in private and state HEI

Data: MoES, Latvia
Percentage of women in HE

2015

Categorization:
- Lecturers
- Docents
- Asoc. prof.
- Prof
- Researcher
- Rectors

Legend:
- State HEI
- Private HEI
- Total
Percentage of women in HE positions

2016
Percentage of women in 1st level HE establishments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>State 1st level</th>
<th>Private 1st level</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Docents</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Gender imbalance as a threat for sustainable development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study field</th>
<th>Female students (%)</th>
<th>Share of female students from total number of students (%)</th>
<th>Share of degrees and qualifications obtained by female students (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities, art</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences, commercial sciences, law</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences, mathematics, statistics</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, manufacturing, construction</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care, social welfare</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main problems that women rectors faced in their rector position

- Internal resistance to changes
- Senate as an academic internal decision making body has permanent «conflict of interests» – Senate members not always are educated enough to take decisions in accordance of modern requirements
- Sometimes there is a political influence from outside, supervising ministry has authoritative way of introducing reforms
- Human resource problems (problems to create a team)
Not all see the GE problem

Do you think that these problems (fully or partly) arose because you are a woman

- Partly agree 50%; neutral 25%, disagree 25%

Comment:
Resistance to changes because people feel threatened, people are not sure of their position.

- Did you felt a different treatment from the side of your subordinates because you are a women

- Agree – 50%, neutral 25%, disagree 25%
Major reforms at a time when you were a rector (examples):
- Mergers of institutes and other structural units;
- Merger of university;
- New programmes, internationalization,
- Introducing of quality management systems
Interviews

Do you agree that these reforms would be easier to fulfil if you were a man?

- Absolutely agree – 25%, agree 50%, disagree 25%

Do you agree that if you would be a man it would be easier to work with the supervising and stakeholder institutions?

- Absolutely agree – 75%, Disagree 25%
Concerning the numbers of women in HE positions, both in senior academic and administrative positions, the situation is improving however the «glass ceiling» still is very strong, especially in large traditional universities. That means that system supports such imbalance.

Some of possible reasons are hidden in the «traditional» election procedures in all academic positions.

The interviews have shown that there is an influence of the leader gender in introducing internal reforms in universities as well in communication with stakeholders.

Sometimes the internal resistance to women-leaders can come from the subordinated men side, however some of women rectors experienced envy and gossip from their women colleagues.

The awareness and communication about influence of gender problems is still very weak; no consequent education and policy neither in university level, neither in state level.
What to do?

- First of all – rise of awareness, continue to speak about the gender problems
- Training clubs for women leaders in academic positions (stress management etc)
- Adjust legislation to define more strict the functions and liabilities of different decision making bodies in academic institutions, go away from election process
- Introduce GE related indicators in accreditation process
Thank you for your attention!