

Session A1: SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP *Equally valuing talent of women and men*

Prof Teresa Rees, Professor, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, Director for Wales, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education – *Diverse leadership styles*

Talk Summary

We have moved from a focus on the 'deficit' model of women as an explanation as to why there are so few women in science and in leadership positions to one that focuses on the way in which institutions are organised. This month sees the launch of the report *Structural Change in Research Institutions* by the European Commission. It argues that improving gender equality improves the quality of research, and vice versa.

We have to remember that scientific excellence is a gendered social construction. Who decides what is 'excellent'? How do they get into those positions? What criteria do they use for determining what is excellent? How transparent are the processes of deciding what is excellent? Is the gender dimension taken account of in the research that is being judged?

Improving these processes can lead to better gender equality in leadership and in science.

As Pro Vice Chancellor for Research at Cardiff University, a large UK research intensive institutions, I sought to change the research culture of the institution by encouraging academics to work together in interdisciplinary teams on big 'challenges'. Following a competition, three University Research Institutes were supported, on Stem Cell Cancer, Neuroscience and Sustainable Places. Interdisciplinary research centres and networks were also supported.

Such interdisciplinary research requires people to work together as teams, and to value each other's contributions. The traditional 'guru/acolyte' model does not work in this context. Similarly, cloning, patronage and the use of close networks of researchers are not so relevant. These large teams can be more inclusive of diversity, more democratic and provide more opportunities for junior researchers to make their mark.

Hence, it is not always policies designed to promote gender equality that have the most effect; gender equality can be enhanced by improving research processes.

Essential reading on this topic!

Interdisciplinary Science Reviews, Special Issue on Gender in Science, Vol. 36, No. 2

Sanchez de Madariaga I, Raudma T, Eichenberger T, Hogan A, Pollitzer E, Rees T Schraudner M and Sergent S (2011) *Structural Change in Research Institutions: Enhancing excellence, gender equality and efficiency in research and innovation* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union EUR 24905 ISBN 978 927920902 4

[The genSET Consensus Report: Recommendations for Action on the Gender Dimension in Science](#)