Unanticipated Consequences of Gender Equality Actions/Programmes

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Background

• Careers of natural scientists and engineers
• Structural considerations – agency (interactions)
• Research projects: ESRC, H2020 PLOTINA
• Informed by gender studies
• Working with natural scientists, practitioners
• How operationalisation and evaluation works and how we can develop better actions (transformative)
Gender equality programmes/actions

• In HE and research – Gender Equality efforts: 2011-16: 113 RPOs had adopted GEPs

• Gender equality efforts (ERA, 2014)
  • a)‘Specific laws/acts regulating gender in public research’;( AT, BE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, PL)
  • b)Acts/incentives stimulating or obliging RPOs to explicitly set up GEPs;’- (for laws on GE in ES, AT,NO, performance agreements in AT, AS in the UK, the Finnish Equality Act covering educational institutions such as universities;
  • c) Strategies (i.e. guidelines, charters/codes, awards, etc) at national, regional level (DE, NL, SI, UK)
How to achieve gender equality?

• Adopting GEPs is complex
• Sometimes we are losing the forest for the tree
  • Award, H2020 review, funding gains
• GEP becoming the aim rather than the process/mechanism
• Starting fresh to create an equal workplace: What is the problem? (Bacchi, 2009) in terms of
  • Organisational structures and processes
  • Work life balance issues (caring, maternity, parental)
  • Attitudes, behaviors, values
  • Knowledge production
• How do we use the GEP?
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Current reality
Assess Needs/
Identify problems

Develop Strategy/ GEP

Implement GEP

Evaluate plan

Data collection and analysis

Lessons Learnt

Feedback

Data collection and analysis
PLOTINA

- “Promoting gender balance and inclusion in research, innovation and training’
- Leading a WP on academic careers and culture change
- Horizon 2020 European project (4y duration)
- 10 partners, 6 RPOs: diversity
- Self-assessment, design, implementation and evaluation of gender actions
- Online library of actions – tools for evaluation
- Quantitative (data analysis/surveys) + Qualitative (Interviews and focus groups)
- But also wider context: AS: how many of you know about AS?
Three overall objectives

• Removing barriers to recruitment, retention and career progression
• Improving decision making by addressing gender imbalances
• Integrating the sex/gender dimension in research/teaching
Overview of PLOTINA and Workpackages

Outcomes:
- An online library of actions
- Good practice guide
- Case studies
- Monitoring system
Developing the library of actions

• Action name:
• Organisation name:
• Organisation type: (Higher education institution/Faculty/ Department/ Research centre/institute)
• Organisation size (number of workers):
• Number of people participating in the action:
• Type of action:
Library of actions - template

• What is its aim/objective? What are the anticipated outcomes/impact?**

• Description of the action and Implementation
  • Target group
  • Describe the Implementation Process (What, how, who)
  • Resources/skills/incentives required
  • Challenges/Resistance
  • Communication (what channels of communication were used? How was it framed?)

• Achievement of the results of the action –output/outcomes*
  • Describe the outputs (e.g. numbers of people participating in the action etc) and outcomes (what did the action do?)
  • Has it contributed to the expected result/output?
  • How do you rate the results compared to the objective: fully achieved, partially achieved, not achieved (and explain why)

• Evaluation - impact(individual/collective, short/medium/long)*
  • What are the short term and medium to long term changes (impact) achieved as part of the action(s) implemented?
  • Please provide any tools used for the evaluation (E.g. feedback forms, questionnaires, interview guides etc)

• What we learnt and how this information can be transferred to other RPOs?
  • Tips/strategies/guides /checklists (operating standards)
  • Reflection – what would you do differently? What could you improve in light of the evaluation of the action? What would you do next time?
Why Unanticipated Consequences

• Evaluation of interventions and best practices – What works?
• Less on what doesn’t work or what might have worked differently – nobody talks about this: no incentive
• But how can we learn from each other? Collaboration, not competition
• Merton (1936) sources
  • Ignorance, lack of knowledge (knowledge gap, harness the expertise inside the organisation)
  • Errors in designing/implementing (resources and expertise, challenge assumptions)
  • Hidden interests and agendas (explicitness of goals and processes)
• Some examples: Overall level of GEP, specific gender actions
# Unanticipated consequences of GE efforts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common characteristics of GE efforts</th>
<th>Unanticipated consequences</th>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on statistics, hard data (representation)</td>
<td>Reinforcing the binary, simplistic, ignoring intersectional identities (gender as central form of inequality), descriptive rather than substantive representation (malestreaming)</td>
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<td>Business case, reputation, benchmark, funding</td>
<td>Individuals feeling complicit to contributing to institutional success definitions (Rankings, new metrics etc) – losing the aim</td>
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<td>Women bearing the cost of those efforts</td>
<td>Overburden esp in STEM, it is their responsibility, less time for work that is recognised for career advancement, emotional cost (resistance), becoming the problem</td>
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<td>Sustainability: monitoring/incentive</td>
<td>Accountability and legitimacy</td>
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Unconscious bias training

Objective: are designed to support the understanding and counteraction of such biases

Evaluation: looking at numbers- completing the training

• Limited effectiveness of training (Kalev et al. 2006)
• Quick fix vs a starting point of a more systematic process of reflection discussion and awareness raising (Noon, 2018)
• The institution is seen as ‘performing diversity’ (Ahmed, 2012)
• Can contribute to blame free narrative
• Emphasis on fixing the individuals rather than structural constraints attributing thus failure to individual action rather than collective responsibility

Recommendations

• Part of a wider programme (Equality Human Rights Commission, 2018)
• Emphasis on the context: time pressure, mental fatigue and being accountable influence individuals’ ability to deliberate (Lai and Banaji, 2018) and implicit bias more likely to influence behavior
• Clarity on aims of UBT and use before/after measures to assess changes (awareness raising/attitude change)- using control and intervention group
• Observation of processes for UBT
How to identify UC?

• Continuous monitoring, feedback and redefining of the action
• Social science expertise and mixed methods can help (qualitative research is key)
• Feedback not only at the time of change but after the change from individuals who implement it and those targeted
• What was the motivation behind the action? What was the objective of the action? What was the outcome in the short term/medium/long term? How did it contribute to structural/cultural change? How did it contribute to changing attitudes, norms, everyday practices?
Leaving with a positive note..

- Great momentum, many steps have been taken, acknowledgement of gender equality (even if in rhetoric)
- Need to invest resources and find ways to identify unanticipated consequences (continuous data collection and reflection and redefining)
- Need to share information and reflect about them – build a community
- We need to think strategically on how to use GEPs to move towards more transformative approaches
  - Constructive complicity (Sara de Jong, 2009)
  - Bifocal approaches (De Vries and Van den Brink, 2016) where fix the women ->> organisational approach

Begin within the existing frame and continually re-design and refine the intervention [...] focus on creating movement towards the transformative.
If you are willing to talk about Unanticipated consequences (negative and positive)

• Please send me an email: charikleia.tzanakou@warwick.ac.uk

• Approach me after the session and talk to me or give me your business card

• I would like to collect information and gather the responses where these would be shared anonymously and confidentially
Thank you for your attention

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