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Gendering the **A**cademy
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Career Instability and **A**symmetries



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Implementation Challenges in Structural Change Projects: learnings from GARCIA

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Topic of the presentation

- Reflection on the process of implementation
 - Discussing the main challenges
 - Supporting factors to deal with and overcome these challenges and threats
 - Lessons learnt
 - For implementation processes and teams
 - For policy design



Empirical Basis

- Results are based on the evaluation of the GARCIA project
- It is a more qualitative evaluation approach
 - More focused on the process of implementation
 - Not so much on outputs and outcomes (too early to measure)
- Presented results ...
 - Are mainly based on semi-structured interviews
 - Target groups:
 - GARCIA implementation teams
 - Collaborators
 - Two different times: Ex-ante and ex-post interviews
 - Aggregated level of analysis: not individual institutions but a more synthesized picture of experiences and observations
 - Selected and preliminary results as we are still in the process of analysing the ex-post interviews



Observations

- GARCIA was designed as an action research project
- Heterogeneity of organisations in terms of ...
 - The awareness for gender (in)equalities
 - the level of implemented gender equality policies
- Most of GARCIA team members are researchers
 - At different career stages: from PhD students to full professors
 - Have different goals, motivations and resources
- Hardly any administrative personnel was part of the GARCIA implementation team
 - Like gender equality officers, HR officers
- Changes in management (rectors, deans, head of departments)



Challenges

- Building links between GARCIA implementation team and organizational structures
 - Alignment with ongoing policy discourses and processes
 - Coordination with established structures and staff
 - Access to decision making committees
- Strong commitment and support of management
 - Only a formal commitment
 - Changes of management
 - Lack of time and often of interest or awareness
- Limited knowledge of organizational change processes
- Implementation activities do not count for career success



Challenges

- Perception of GARCIA as ...
 - competitor or intruder
 - Not recognized as support or opportunity
 - Research project
 - Not recognized as aiming for structural change
- Consequences:
 - Building up parallel structures and activities
 - can lead to resistance and non-cooperation
 - Hardly any influence on the organizational structures
 - localized, restricted level of implementation
 - In the long run: sustainability?



Supportive factors

- Nomination/promotion of GARCIA team members into decision making positions
 - Power to influence agenda setting and decision making processes
 - But also into other committees or interest groups that allowed to promote the GARCIA objectives
- Making use of informal network ties
 - Reputation of senior scientists within organization
- Broad stakeholder engagement: Finding allies/change agents
 - Establishment of a task force or coordination group
 - External stakeholders or policy makers
- Support by top level management
 - Acceptance is not enough
- Provision of data and expertise
 - Evidence based policy development



Lessons learnt

- How to secure support of top level management?
 - Formal letter of support is an insufficient instrument
 - Other ways are needed to secure or even enforce the commitment
 - Supported by the EC?
- Participatory design and stakeholder involvement
 - From the beginning on
 - Formal process is more effective (task force or coordination group)
 - Time consuming process to establish an effective and recognized implementation team
- Who is targeted by structural change calls?
 - Are researchers the right group for implementing such projects?
 - What kind of expertise is needed?



Concluding Remarks

- Nevertheless ...
 - Structural change projects can make a difference
 - produce a lot of organizational knowledge
 - can trigger changes
 - But concrete impacts will only be visible in the long run
 - Projects are an opportunity to learn and self-reflection
 - But only if it is observed/evaluated
 - Focus not on outcomes and impacts but on practices and process
 - How can we make use of this knowledge in the future?
- But ...
 - Sustainability remains the main challenge
 - Start thinking about sustainability in the planning phase already
 - Inclusion of sustainability plans or concepts in the proposal should be mandatory
 - How could research institutions be supported in their endeavour to make actions sustainable?



THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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