

Excellence and gender in the working environment

Minna Salminen-Karlsson

FESTA and excellence

- The quest for excellence influences the working environment
- Good working environment is necessary for reaching excellence
- The quest for excellence has different effects on women's and men's careers

Germany, Bulgaria and Sweden

- Germany: Universities are excellent.
 - When working at an excellent university, excellence is a positive concept
 - Problems: work-life balance, mobility, young researchers' careers
- Bulgaria: Excellence is a foreign concept
 - Talking about excellence introduces ideas and practices of Western research policies
 - Problems: be part of the European research scene
- Sweden: Excellence is a political concept
 - Excellence is a concept invented by policy makers to control and direct research
 - Problems: the political concept of excellence has negative influences on research and research environments

Problem areas for gender equality

- Informal power
- Independence
- Requirements of mobility
- Research and life outside research
- Teaching and other academic tasks

Implementation phase

Feed back the results to the environment

The picture of gendered perceptions of excellence will be fed back to the department in a workshop where questions of the implicit functions of these perceptions, their rationality, their potential for marginalizing different researchers etc will be discussed. Harmful practices may not be changed but they should become less valued in the environment.

Using the excellence concept as leverage in gender equality work

- At South-West University the combination of the two new concepts, excellence and gender, raised new insights and changed attitudes.
- At RWTH Aachen University, where excellence is viewed as a positive concept, there was practically no interest in discussing the gender and excellence relation among the academic staff.
- At Uppsala University, where the academics generally were critical to the concept, the task contributed to ongoing work for improving working environments and gender equality

Thank you

Excellent researchers

- publish in high-ranking journals
- benefit their research area with something new and durable.
- passionate about research
- good leaders
- visible
- hardworking
- conscientious
- persevering
- creative
- visionary
- independent