

Networking against structural inequalities

Objectives

The participants will learn about the institutionalization of gender equality policy in universities as they visit the gender equality officer of their university or research institution. They will get informed about the status and position of the gender equality officer and its legal background, especially concerning recruitment processes in academia, the gender equality actions of the organization and the offerings for women scientists in the organisation. Furthermore, they will get acquainted with the importance of networking, get to know different networks of women scientists and learn about structural gender inequalities in science.

Introductory Notes

In this session the focus will be on structural gender inequalities the individual is rather powerless against and that cannot be resolved with individual interaction strategies. As an example of structural inequalities the gender bias of the peer review system is introduced and discussed.

Networking, formal and informal, as a strategy against structural gender biases is the focus of the lesson. Different networks for women scientists are introduced.

In the first part of the lesson a meeting with or visit of the gender equality officer is scheduled. The meeting with the equality officer will be flanked with tasks for the participants to actively intervene in the talk with the equality officer. The participants will be handed out cards describing situations where an equality officer might help or have some useful information. In order to avoid a pure frontal setting during the visit, participants will have to empathize with fictive personas and will have to address to the equality officer and ask for advice. The aim is to give an overview what kinds of supports or information an equality officer can offer.

In the second part the participants discuss a study on the gender biased peer review system, in the exemplary study on the Swedish Medical Council and their evaluation practices of research proposals of medicine.

In-Class-Time

240 minutes, including 30 minutes break.

Preparation of the lesson will take more time in advance since a meeting with an external person, the gender equality officer, is to be organized.

Schedule and Teaching Instructions

Preparation for the session:

Contacting the gender equality officer and organize a meeting with the group or a visit of the group in his/her office. The design of the meeting will differ depending if you visit the departmental gender equality officer or the person in charge for the whole university/organization. Meeting the departmental gender equality officer allows you to focus more on existing funding opportunities for physics, on special networks of women physicists and other specificities of the physics community.

Make sure that the gender equality officer knows about the intervening situation cards the participants will be handed out.

Preparing situation cards to hand out to the participants.

Examples of cards can be:

Imagine you are in the following situation: As a PostDoc researcher you want to continue your research at a university abroad. You do not know how to get some funding for it, if your partner and your little 2-year-old child can accompany you.

Imagine you are in the following situation: You want to have some solid arguments when discussing with your male colleagues if women are discriminated in appointment procedures or if there simple are not enough women physicists interested and competent enough to hold a professorship in physics.

Imagine you are in the following situation: You want to apply for an open position at the physics department but you do not have any details on the physics department, except the information you get from its website. You would like to know something about the climate in the department, is it chilly against women or rather open-minded.

Cards should cover topics like:

- gender equality in application procedures
- women's professional networks and how to find them
- child care options at university
- data on women in science/physics
- informal networks, how to get top know other women in the department

Homework for the participants in preparation for the session:

- Read the article of Wennerås/Wold (1997)

Introduction and preparation for the meeting:

15 minutes

Hand out situation cards with question to ask the equality officer. Not every one needs a card. They can build groups of two persons.

State that they will have to think about what they would ask the equality officer in order to solve their problem described on the situation cards.

Meeting the equality officer:

90-100 minutes

Visit of or meeting with the equality officer. As design for the visit you can choose an input with subsequent question round or a panel where you talk with the equality officer about his/her work in a more conversational mode. Then, for the intervention of the participants, hold one chair free. Explain to them before that they can take a seat on the chair when they feel it is time to bring in their situation card problem.

Participants' Break:

30 minutes

Group Work:

45 minutes

Building groups. Groups should not be bigger than 4 people.

Exercise on Work Sheet in Groups.

Depending on the country you teach this lesson you can think of replacing the logos on the worksheet with those of the women's networks of your own country.

Group Presentation:

45 minutes

Plenary discussion on the questions raised on the work sheet

Work Sheet: Networking against structural inequalities



Rethink the findings of Wennerås/Wold regarding:

- Measuring productivity of a scientist. Is it an appropriate measure? What is your opinion?
- Factors influencing the scores in review?
- Is the peer review system, exercised this way, adequate in order to find out which proposals merit realisation?
- Suggestions for change?

Having listened to the talk of the gender equality officer, discuss:

- Can gender equality policy do anything against such kinds of structural inequalities?
- Can women's networks take action against such inequalities? Do you have ideas?
- Do you know the logos above and something about the organisation's activities?

Obligatory Reading

Wennerås, Christine; Wold, Agnes (1997): Nepotism and sexism in peer-review. In: *Nature* 387 (22 May): 341-343.

Further Reading

On structural inequalities:

Fox, Mary Frank (1995): Women and scientific careers. In: *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*. Sheila Jasanoff et al. (eds.). Sage, Thousand Oaks: 205-223.

Shen, Helen (2013): Mind the Gender Gap. In: *Nature* 495 (7. March 2013): 22-24.

Sonnert, Gerhard; Holton, Gerald (1996): *Who succeeds in Science? The Gender Dimension*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.

Van den Brink, Marieke (2011): Scouting for talent: Appointment practices of women professors in academic medicine. In: *Social Science & Medicine* 72: 2033-2040.

On Networking:

Murillo, Luis Felipe R et al. (2012): Partial Perspectives in Astronomy: Gender, Ethnicity, Nationality and Meshworks in Building Images of the Universe and Social Worlds. In: *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 37 (1, March): 36–50.

On Gender Equality policy in Physics:

Rolin, Kristina; Vainio, Jenny (2011): Gender in Academia in Finland: Tensions between Policies and Gendering Processes in Physics Departments. In: *Science Studies* 24 (1): 26-46.

Additional Resources and Materials

- Working Group Equal Opportunities of the German Physical Society: <https://www.dpg-physik.de/dpg/gliederung/ak/akc/index.html> (retrieved 06.09.2017)
- WG 5 Women in Physics of IUPAP: <http://iupap.org/working-groups/wg5-women-in-physics/> (retrieved 06.09.2017)