

Conference:
Women Leadership in Higher Education: Beyond the Glass Ceiling -
Women Rectors Across Europe
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Women Rectors and Campus Conflict Management

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- European universities – fundamental changes after expansion and massification
- Bologna reforms – asking for new university leadership and management – new expectations from universities
- Resistance to change is always present – conflicts are natural state

About conflicts

- Conflict – a process that occurs between two or more persons or groups when they have different points of views, different goals, needs and values.
- Six causes of conflicts:
 - (1) needs or wants are not met
 - (2) values are being tested
 - (3) perceptions are being questioned
 - (4) assumptions are being made
 - (5) knowledge is minimal
 - (6) expectations are too high/too low(Shah, 2008)

- Conflict management influences individual wellbeing, group performance and organizational effectiveness. As conflicts are parts of everyday life, the key purpose of managing them is **to minimise damage**.
- Organization leaders are responsible for creating a work environment that enables people to thrive. If problems appear, disagreements and differences of opinion escalate into interpersonal conflict, a leader must intervene immediately.
- In conflict-ridden situations, personal skills and interventions are critical.

Expectations from university

- In promoting quality culture at universities – a central issue is the relationship between leadership and academic and administrative staff.

Leadership is expected to:

- create conditions for quality culture development
- ensure that staff members can perform to the best of their abilities – in accordance with the values of the institution
- offer good communication, motivation and opportunities for staff development
- Reduce administrative workload for academic staff to **create free time and resources for new ideas**

Women dealing with conflicts

- Harvard university – Negotiation Journal - how women respond when involved in conflicts.

Five components – parts of the process of resolving a conflict:

- a) **Integrating** – ability to meet the needs of both parts.
Both genders equally prefer to work with the other party in the conflict to determine the best possible solution
- b) **Compromising** – controlling the negotiating outcome.
No significant difference found – for women every issue has room for negotiation. Women are more concerned with fairness.

Women dealing with conflicts

- c) Competing - males showed to be more 25% more competitive –
- d) Smoothing – giving in to the other party while ignoring one's own needs
20% difference between females and males
Guess in whose favour?!
- e) Avoiding – same as withdrawing.
Women outscored men by 30%.
(Some people simply hate difficult conversations and will do anything to avoid facing the issue).

My personal reflections as rector

- To introduce innovations – difficult
What I have learned?
 - there is always lot of creative individuals ready to support good ideas and a change - how to find and motivate them
 - Large comprehensive universities – integrative functions – how to turn to identification of everybody with university instead with the faculty – a great challenge
 - How to pass decisions through governing bodies???
Lobbing before the meeting - no

- One has to spend lot of time and energy talking to people individually – professors, students, administrative staff...
- Compromise and understanding of people with opposite opinions...

It was true for myself that I didn't exercise formal authority and tried to develop wider enthusiasm within the institution.

I did all of that intuitively without studying literature on university management – but my field of expertise is entrepreneurship – rectorship was an entrepreneurial challenge for me.

- Thank you