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


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