



Equality observations in researcher recruitment

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Programme

Short introduction:

- equal conditions and equality in higher education
- research on the risks of bias in recruitment processes

During the interview

Observing as method (VR 2018)

Being an active observer

Questions and discussion

Inequality in the academic system?

Studies have shown that a wide range of aspects in higher education across Europe risk a lack of equal conditions, for example regarding:

- research careers
- research funding
- salaries
- conditions of employment
- career paths
- educational choices
- study and working environment
- prevalence of violence



These issues affect the quality of universities' output.

Benefits of equality and equal conditions

- ✓ Contributions to high quality of education and research
- ✓ Competence provision: recruiting the best and most talented, not overlooking qualified candidates
- ✓ Effectiveness, resource management
- ✓ A well-functioning and safe work and study environment
- ✓ Competitiveness/attractiveness
- ✓ Representation of the surrounding community



Democracy and human rights

How can we “do” equality in practise?

Key factors for result-oriented successful gender mainstreaming and increased equality overall:

- “Seeing” and addressing the problems
 - Responsibility of govn. bodies/managers: status, resources
 - Role models etc.
 - Genuine involvement of staff/employees or at the very least awareness in the organization/group
 - Education and raising knowledge
 - Information, measurable objectives and dialogue
 - Experts and coordination, “best practices”
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- CONSTRUCTIVISM: what we actually do, not what we **say** we do.
 - PRACTICAL AND SYSTEMATIC IMPLEMENTATION
 - DAILY WORK AND INTERACTION

Research on inequality in researcher recruitment

- Construction of excellence is constantly done in different (academic) rooms
- Important how to assess merit, and clear criteria helps objectivity
- Assessment can be influenced by implicit associations
- Awareness of how images of the ideal academic are created
- Awareness of possible gendered images of leadership
- Small details in the interview situation can have a large impact on choice and preference
- Meritocracy does not always guarantee objectivity

During the interview

Awareness of bias in the interviewer

- Halo-effect
- Horns' effect
- Similarity-effect /Affinity effect
- State of mind
- Contrast-effect
- Fundamental error of attribution

Types of questions asked by the interviewer

- Behavior-oriented (competency-based recruitment)
- Hypothetical
- Interviewer should avoid leading, multiple-choice, and double questions.
- Interviewer should strive to ask short, direct, and simple questions—avoid ambiguities.

Assess and evaluate the candidates answers

- Importance of following the recruitment profile
- Rating the answers according to the set-rating scales
- Determining personal rating before discussing with others
- Relevant feedback should be given to the candidate
- Letting the decision take time determine

The 8 most important things for an interviewer to remember:

1. You are not always objective - be alert to your feelings and impressions
2. Understand and relate to the candidate's situation
3. Be present and show interest in the candidate
4. Work in a structured way throughout the entire recruitment process and base it on the job requirements profile
5. Keep in mind that you convey your university's employer brand
6. Do not be satisfied with the first answers you get- always ask follow up questions
7. Do not be afraid of silence or letting the candidate talk about personal qualities
8. End the interview with information about the next step in the recruitment process

Observing as method

Observations

Observation is an ethnographic method in which the observer studies a group's activities, language, conversation culture and the group's social interaction, in real time. Participatory observation of various processes is widely practiced in, for example, educational sciences, sociology of science and technology, and science and technology studies.

Participatory observation is a method that allows observers to capture the discrepancy between what we believe or say we do, and what we actually do and say. The advantage of the observers observing the interaction in real time is that the material has not been filtered by any other actor.

There are challenges in using the method: it can be difficult to see patterns in what is familiar and familiar, and our perception is selective. There is also always a risk that the observers will make s

The observation phase is followed by an analysis phase in which recurring themes in the collected material are identified, but an initial analysis is already underway during the observation process itself. This is done by the observer making notes that are not only descriptive but also reflexive.

In the final phase, the project management creates a text in which identified and recurring themes together form a coherent narrative of interpretations or misinterpretations.

For the qualitative approach used in gender equality observations, one of the starting points is that all actors' actions depend on how they understand and ascribe meaning to the instructions and the situation they encounter in their assignment. For example, the reviewers must interpret the instructions given by the Swedish Research Council. The individuals' interpretation and use of the grading criteria, as well as the review panel's dynamics, will therefore be central to the outcome.

Being an active observer

Important aspects of observation/assessment

- Observers have an important role with given mandate.
- Information about PULSE's gender equality goals. What goals do the assessors relate to?
- Increase vigilance on gender equality in the interview/assessment. Who brings these issues up? When? How?
- Continue to pay attention to the issue of the assessment of competence and qualifications: scientific, pedagogical, administrative. When and how are they addressed?
- Pay attention to speech time. Who talks? For how long? About what?
- Documentation of the interview. Observation template/form?
- Observers should be aware of their own biases.

How to actively point out inequality in an ongoing interview

- Following a template that is known before hand.
- Being actively involved and knowing what to look for.
- Curious interruptions? Ask follow-up questions.
- Pointing out discrepancies in time dispersal between intervwier and interviewee.
- Rely on your given mandate.

Suitable follow-up questions

1. What have you learned from this?/ What is your biggest finding from this experience?
2. What would you like to change/do differently the next time?
3. Can you elaborate on the answer?/Can you develop your answer further?
4. Could you tell me/us more about...?
5. What was your contribution/your part in this?
6. How do you feel when you think about xxxx?
7. If you would give a tip to someone else how to act (or not act) in a similar situation, what would it be?

Vad have previous equality observations in research shown?

- Individual women are viewed based on their perceptions of women, not as specific individuals. Many men (and women) are not trained to see women's competence.
- The assessment groups' handling of applications differed depending on gender. The way women and men's achievements were talked about was different, generally speaking. Women's achievements were devalued, men's achievements were instead highlighted.
- Previous collaboration tends to be viewed as positive for male candidates but as negative for female candidates.

Questions and discussion

Reflection and discussion

Describe a professional recruitment that you have experienced as equal and inclusive.

What contributed to this?

What was your role here and what were the roles of others?

What were the conditions, what actions and behaviors created the inclusive environment?

Usefull links

- [En jämställd process: En kvalitativ undersökning av bedömningen av forskningsbidragsansökningar 2019](#)
- Liisa Husu och Anne-Charlott Callerstig: Riksbankens jubileumsfonds beredningsprocesser ur ett jämställdhetsperspektiv. RJ rapporterar 2018:1
- [A gender-neutral process - Gender equality observations in the Swedish Research Council's review panels 2016](#)
- [Jämställdhetsobservationer i fyra beredningsgrupper 2011 - Vetenskapsrådet](#)



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