Article

Women in Higher Education Management: Agents for Cultural and Structural Change?

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Abstract: This article examines whether and under which conditions a rising participation of women in higher education management contributes to cultural and structural change in science and research. In Austria, the introduction of a statutory quota regulation for university decision-making bodies like the rectorate, the senate, or the university council brought about a rapid and substantial increase in the share of female rectors and vice rectors. However, there are also gender-specific differences among rectorate members: women are significantly younger than men when they take up a rectorate position and switch less frequently from a professorship to such a position. This situation and the gender expertise of the rectors and vice rectors themselves contribute to the potential for change. Explicit gender equality goals and the establishment of gender competence as a qualification criterion for all rectors and vice rectors would be needed to make use of the potential of women in the rectorate to be agents for cultural and structural change.

Keywords: women in higher education management; quota; cultural change; gender equality; gender competence

1. Introduction

Increasing the number of women in top positions in academia—in full professorships and top management—has been a goal of gender equality policies for quite a while. The underrepresentation of women in top positions indicates persistent structural barriers for women's carriers (the so-called glass ceiling). Women in top positions are confronted with the expectation that they act like a role model and change "the rules of the game" to reduce the gendered organization (e.g., Acker 1990) or the male dominated culture in organizations (e.g., Kanter 1977). However, this implicit assumption that participation of the underrepresented sex above a critical mass will initiate cultural or structural change is problematic for two reasons: First, it compounds two different gender equality goals—to abolish structural barriers for women's careers and to change the "rules of the game" like decision making criteria, norms, or values underlying assessment procedures, etc. Second, the competence to initiate structural or cultural change is only attributed to women which would assign the responsibility for change to women only. Organizational change requires the involvement of all relevant stakeholders—male and female (e.g., De Vries and Brink 2016).

Sarah Childs and Krook (2008) address the problematic equalization of these two gender equality goals by differentiating between descriptive and substantive representation in their research on links between the presence of women in political institutions and the passage of "women-friendly" policy outcomes. The application of the distinction between the two elements of representation facilitates the discussion of empirical evidence from different countries showing that increasing female participation in decision making does not automatically bring about change of structural barriers, decision making criteria, or the dominant institutional culture (e.g., Read and Kehm 2016; Peterson 2011; Neale and Özkanli 2010; Childs and Krook 2008; Bown 1999).

The concept of representation as formulated by Childs and Krook (2008) will be used to discuss the effects of a quota regulation for top management positions in Austrian universities. Austria is one of the countries which are ranked below the European average regarding gender equality (e.g., according to the European Research Area (ERA) progress report 2018, EC 2019) but are labelled as a proactive country regarding gender equality policies in R and I (Lipinsky 2014). Gender equality policies have a long tradition that stretches back to the early 1990s and include a bundle of different measures to address three specific goals: the promotion of access to university education and university careers for women, the creation of anti-discrimination structures, and the promotion and institutionalization of women's studies (Wroblewski et al. 2007). As a consequence, more and more women now go to university and women have been in the majority among students and graduates for over 20 years. Nonetheless, gender-specific segregation still persists in degree subject choice (i.e., women remain underrepresented in technical disciplines but dominate in the humanities and education science) and women are still denied access to top positions (professorships and management). Scientific culture has likewise scarcely changed. The scientific ideal remains steadfastly oriented on an image presented at a time when women still had little access to universities, namely Max Weber's (Weber 1919) portrayal of the "ideal scientist" as a man who can dedicate his life to science without constraint. As the Austrian gender regime is based on a modernized male breadwinner model (Pfau-Effinger 1999) where mothers work part time and the traditional distribution of roles in the household still prevails, women are far less likely to be able to conform to this ideal than men. In other words, the dominant scientific culture contains a gender bias. Austrian higher education policy initially sought to address this problem by facilitating access to university for women and supporting them in their careers.

Since the turn of the millennium, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making and management functions in science and research has been recognized as one of the primary causes for the persistence of gender-specific differences in this field (e.g., Lipinsky 2014; Morley 2014; O'Connor 2014; EC European Commission, European Commission, European Commission; Riegraf et al. 2010; Husu 2004). To address this, Austria has also sought to increase the share of women in higher education management through gender mainstreaming, e.g., by amending the Universities Act 2002 (Universitätsgesetz, UG) to include a quota regulation for university bodies which applies for the rectorate, the university council, the senate, and committees set up by the senate like curricular committees or appointment committees for full professors (§20a UG Universities Act 2002).

This quota regulation came into effect in 2009. It initially foresaw that at least 40% of the members of a university body must be women. In 2015, this was raised to 50%. According to Ingrid Guldvik (2011), this is as a "strong quota regime", since the law formulates sanctions for failure to comply. In the event that a university body does not meet the required quota for female members, explicit consent to its actual make-up must be obtained from the working group on equal opportunities[1]. If the working group does not give this consent, the body is deemed to be incorrectly constituted, cannot make decisions, and must be reconstituted.

The introduction of this quota regulation brought about a clear and immediate rise in female rectorate members in Austria. In the year prior to its introduction, the share of female rectorate members lay at 27%; in 2011, it had risen to 40%. In 2018, the share of women lay at almost 50% and 7 of the country's 22 universities had female rectors. Austria was thus very successful in achieving the goal of integrating women into higher education management.

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[1]   The senate of each university establishes an equal opportunities working group responsible for combating gender discrimination by university governing bodies and advising and supporting the university's members and governing bodies in connection with issues relating to equal opportunities and the advancement of women (§42 UG Universities Act 2002). The working group is involved in all personnel decisions (it receives the texts of advertisements for positions, a list of applications received, and a list of candidates invited for interviews). The working group is represented on appointment and habilitation committees in an advisory capacity. If the working group has reason to believe that a decision by a university governing body reflects gender discrimination it is entitled to invoke the arbitration commission.

When analyzing the effects of the introduction of the quota regulation on gender equality we distinguish between the share of women in rectorate (descriptive representation) and their management style and commitment to gender equality (which we see as the precondition for substantive representation). We assume that progress towards structural or cultural change requires a reflexive gender equality policy (Wroblewski 2016). A reflexive gender equality policy goes beyond the formal adaptation of a gender equality plan. It is rather an ongoing and evidence-based process with constant reflection of progress and failure. One of the main characteristics of a reflexive gender equality policy is that management in general but especially women in management positions advocate gender equality and structural or cultural change. The latter comprises all measures to actively push the removal of structures which are grounded in the traditional ideal of science and therefore represent a barrier not only for the careers of women but of all scientists who do not match the perception of the "ideal scientist".

In the first part of this article, we will focus on the descriptive representation of women in rectorate by describing the integration of women into higher education management in Austria since 2004, the year that the country's universities gained their autonomy, and their rectorates assumed a management rather than a self-administration function (Höllinger and Titscher 2004). The description also examines selected characteristics of rectorate members such as age and academic background. The second part of the article takes a closer look at the path to the rectorate from the perspective of female rectors or vice rectors as well as their motivation for taking on such a role. It also discusses whether and under which conditions they feel responsible for gender equality and the advancement of women. In the third section, the article discusses the potential for change afforded by women in the rectorate, examining thereby the restrictions to and possible means of strengthening this potential.

2. Data

The analysis is based on three datasets. (1) The official Austrian higher education statistics, which include details on the composition of university bodies for all 22 universities (i.e., number of male and female members, sex of the head of the university body). This data is publicly available on the internet. (2) A database created from the results of our own internet and document research. This database contains information on all persons who have served as rectorate members in Austria since the universities gained autonomy in 2004, including present incumbents. As of June 2018, the database contained records for a total of 249 persons—91 women and 158 men. Each record includes the following information: name, gender, and rectorate position (with start and end dates, responsibilities, university). We also researched whether the person had held a professorship prior to assuming a rectorate position and which function or position he/she occupied after leaving the rectorate. (3) A series of 23 interviews with women who have held a rectorate position in the last 15 years. These women represented 16 of the 22 Austrian universities. Interview partners were selected according to three criteria: year of entering rectorate (till 2006, between 2007 and 2011, from 2012 on), position before rectorate (professoriate, other academic position in the university, non-academic position) and type of university (technical university, medical university, university of arts or full university). All contacted women agreed to give an interview. The interviews were semi-structured and started with a description of the way into the management position. Furthermore, they focused on relevant gatekeepers, concept of management, management practices, and perceived support as well as challenges regarding the management position. For interview partners who already left the rectorate the following career steps were discussed. The interviews were conducted by the author (a senior researcher in higher education research) from May 2017 to June 2018. They lasted between 45 and 90 min and were recorded and transcribed with the prior consent of the interviewees. The information gathered through the interviews was interpreted on the basis of a thematic analysis which involved the identification and categorization of themes emerging from the data (following the approach of Bogner et al. 2009).

With the presented research top positions in autonomous universities became for the first-time object of a qualitative study in Austria. So far, the analytical focus was on the development of the share of women in rectorate. Since no information is as yet available on the perception of rectorate

positions from a female perspective, we deliberately focused on women and designed our study as an exploratory research endeavor.

3. Female Rectors and Vice Rectors at Austrian Universities

Along with the council and the senate, the rectorate is the highest management body in a university. The rectorate manages the university and represents it in the outside world.[2] The rector is the head of the rectorate and also acts as its spokesperson (§ 22, Universities Act 2002). Rector positions must be publicly advertised. A rector is appointed by the university council for a period of four years from a shortlist of three candidates proposed by the senate. Vice rectors are appointed by the university council on the recommendation of the rector following a senate hearing. Their term of office corresponds to that of the rector.

3.1. Female Representation in Rectorate

Since the introduction of the quota regulation for university bodies in 2009, the share of female rectors and vice rectors at Austrian universities has risen: from 21.6% in 2005 to 47.9% in 2017 (see Figure 1). The most significant rise was seen in 2011, when the share of women increased by around 10 percentage points (from 32% in 2010 to 41% in 2011). In other words, only two years after the introduction of the quota regulation, the overall share of female rectorate members lay at over 40%. In the last 10 years, the share of female rectors has risen in particular. In the years 2007, 2008, and 2010, there was one female rector in Austria. From 2011 onwards, more and more women were appointed as rectors and their share rose to 38%. The positive trend in the share of female vice rectors started from a higher baseline figure: in 2005, 29% of vice rectors were women and this rose to over 50% following the introduction of the quota regulation.
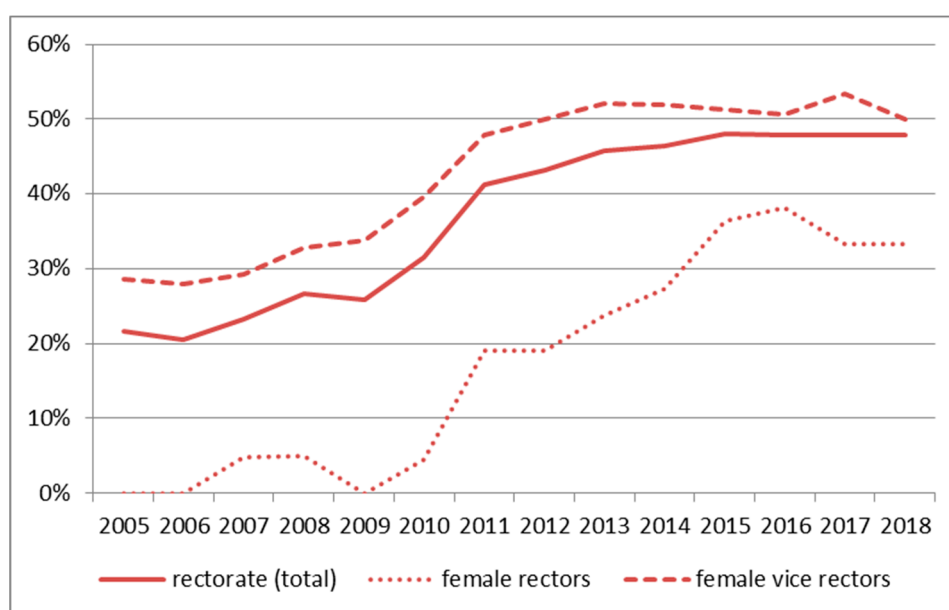

Figure 1. Female rectors and vice rectors 2005–2017. Source: Federal Ministry for Eduation, Science and Research (unidata).

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[2] The rectorate is responsible for all matters not assigned to other governing bodies by the Austrian Universities Act 2002. Duties of the rectorate include among others the preparation of the draft statute for submission to the senate and development of the university development plan for submission to the senate and the university council, preparation of the university organization plan for submission to the senate and the university council, preparation and negotiation of the performance agreement with the Federal Ministry for Education, Science, and Research, and the appointment of the heads of organizational units (§22 UG Universities Act 2002).

In 2018, women accounted for at least 40% of rectorate members at all universities in Austria with the exception of the University of Mining Leoben. In nine rectorates (43% of universities), women constitute at least half of the members, i.e., these rectorates also meet the 50% requirement. One rectorate is made up solely of women. In recent years, the number of rectorates with a female participation rate below 40% has continued to fall. When the quota regulation for university bodies was introduced in 2009, 18 rectorates (82%) still had a female participation rate of below 40%.

In the years immediately following the implementation of the Universities Act 2002, female vice rectors were often assigned responsibility for areas like academic affairs (e.g., teaching, curricula) or human resources; 59% of female vice rectors between 2003 and 2007 were responsible for these areas. Women who were not appointed to a vice rector position until after 2007 were already far less likely to be given responsibility for these areas (41%). In contrast, the share of female vice rectors responsible for financial affairs, finance or budgets has remained relatively constant at 30%.

In a comparison of EU Member States and other associated countries, Austria assumes a good position in the ranking by share of women in higher education management, where it lies in ninth place behind the Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Denmark), Montenegro, Latvia, and Slovenia (EC European Commission, p. 142). The share of women in higher education management grew significantly between 2007 and 2014, rising, for example, in the EU from 9% to 15% (i.e., by a factor of 1.7). The highest rise in the share of women can be found in Denmark—from 0% to 31%—followed by Austria with a rise from 4% to 26%, i.e., by a factor of 6.5. A clear rise can also be seen in the Netherlands (from 7% to 21%; i.e., by a factor of 3).[3] Hence, the position in international rankings of Austria is quite different regarding female participation in higher education management and other gender equality indicators. Regarding the share of women professors or women PhD graduates women scores below the EU average (EC European Commission).

3.2. Gender Characteristics of Rectors and Vice Rectors

The share of women among all former or current rectors or vice rectors in Austria since 2004 lies at 36.5% and is thus lower than the current figure. This is because some women remain in a rectorate position longer than the average, while others change position again very quickly. Of the 249 people who have held a rector or vice rector position since 2004, 99 (39.8%) are still active. Of these, 48.5% are women and 51.5% are men. On average, former rectors or vice rectors served in this capacity for 6.2 years. However, the average duration of a rectorship or vice rectorship is noticeably lower for women (5.1 years) than for men (6.6 years). The average age for taking up a rector or vice rector position is 50.9 years, whereby women are typically almost five years younger than men when they do so: on average, women first become rectors or vice rectors at the age of 47.7 years, while men do so at the age of 52.5 years.

Slightly more than half of rectors or vice rectors hold a professorship prior to their appointment to the rectorate (54.6%). A further 16.7% are associate professors, assistant professors, or university lecturers. In other words, 71% of rectors or vice rectors have an academic career background. The remaining 28.5% have either a doctorate, a PhD and/or a university degree. Theses persons generally move to a rectorate from a non-university organization (business or industrial enterprise, research, or other institution with close ties to science) and are referred to in the remainder of this article as external experts.

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[3] Even if the trends in these two countries are comparable to those in Austria, they are not based on comparable political measures. While the upward trend in Austria can be attributed primarily to a statutory quota regulation, no such statutory measures were implemented in Denmark or the Netherlands. In 2008, the Netherlands introduced a "Towards the Top" Charter as a "soft law" measure to increase the share of women in management in companies, organizations or institutions. Denmark introduced a guideline that 30% of the workforce in companies and public sector enterprises should be women but did not pass a corresponding legislation (EC European Commission).

It is also worth noting that far fewer women than men switch from a professorship to a rector or vice rector position. While two thirds of male rectors or vice rectors previously hold a professorship, this is only the case for just over one third of their female counterparts. Women switch far more frequently than men from mid-level academic positions to positions in a rectorate (women: 25%; men: 12%). Similarly, more women than men join rectorates from an external expert position.

Of the 249 rectors or vice rectors in Austria since 2004, 27 moved from being vice rector at one university to a rectorate position in another higher education establishment (university or university of applied sciences in Austria or abroad) or from vice rector to rector at the same university. The share of women in this group lies at 25.9%. Another group have occupied their positions as rector or vice rector for extended periods of time: in 39 cases, for more than eight years (or two administrative periods). The share of women in this group lies at 28.2%. In other words, when compared to their share of total rectorate members, women are underrepresented in the group of rectors and vice rectors who have made a career in higher education management.

Given their age differences, the situation for men and women also differs when they leave the rectorate. One in five male rectors or vice rectors retires when he leaves his rectorate position, compared to only 5% of their female counterparts. Further, 50% of female and 39% of male rectors or vice rectors return to academia—predominantly at the same university. Only in two cases have vice rectors switched directly from their rectorate position to an academic management post (e.g., head of institute) at another university. Vice rectors who moved from a professorship to a rectorate often subsequently return to their former institute. Yet 23% of female and 28% of male rectors or vice rectors move to a non-academic management position in another institution, e.g., another higher education establishment, business, or institution with close ties to science. Further, 11% of female and 6% of male rectors or vice rectors go on to manage a non-academic unit at their own university; 11% of female and 8% of male rectors or vice rectors move either to other functions (e.g., in politics) or to a role that could not be identified in our search.

3.3. Path to the Rectorate and Underlying Motivation for the Move

In most cases, active search for qualified women took place: the female rectors and vice rectors we interviewed were asked directly if they would like to apply for this position; only in rare cases had they simply applied for the position without being contacted beforehand. Two of our interviewees reported that a head-hunter had been involved in the recruitment process. Several interviewees noted that gender had played a role in their appointment, because women were specifically being sought. "It was the perfect opportunity for me because they were looking for a woman to fill the position." (I17)

Contacting women directly regarding a rector or vice rector position plays a central role in facilitating their access to the rectorate: most of our interviewees had neither actively sought nor foreseen such a move in their career planning. "I would never have thought about applying myself—not in a million years." (I15) "Becoming a rector or vice rector didn't feature in my plans for my future." (I16)

They had "caught the attention" of the key decision makers (e.g., the rector or the university senate/council members) in their previous careers. While the contexts in which they had been recognized fall into a broad range of categories—e.g., scientific excellence, knowledge management, services with close ties to science, university self-administration, or previous management experience—they had all been recognized through their committee work or previous positions for their professionalism, knowledge, and competence. Their achievements had included setting up an institute, establishing a university service unit or subsidiary as well as their work on committees, as deans or heads of institute. Female professors in technical disciplines often mentioned that—as the first and only women in their fields—they were noticed by default. The level of visibility they had gained through their prior activities was frequently seen as the deciding factor for their move to the rectorate.

The will to shape and change things is frequently mentioned as a key motivation for the move to the rectorate. This applies in equal measure to women who make this move from within or outside the university. They all want to advance the university and introduce new structures (e.g., as part of

the Bologna process) and were frequently motivated by the prospect of being able to modernize the university. "You always think that a job like that will give you the opportunity to shape things. How much you can actually do so in the end is a different matter." (I20)

Through their extensive committee work experience, the interviewees already had a good idea of what worked and what could be done differently. "Yes, perhaps my knowledge of the university. You know the problems from so many different sides when you have held a mid-level academic position for as long as I had and have sat on X number of committees." (I17)

Their concrete ideas for shaping and changing the university include making it more staff-friendly, i.e., placing the focus on workplace quality (I20), raising the value of research in the host community (I2) or changing its profile by improving the relationship between the university and researchers and profiling the university as a regional player (I21).

Interest in specific aspects of the work of a vice rectorate, e.g., research management or international relations, is another important motive for such a move. Some of the women we interviewed also saw the rectorate position as an opportunity to get to know their own research fields from a praxis perspective. This was accompanied by the desire to shape things and combine theory with practice (I1, I11, I12, I21). Some interviewees saw the position in the rectorate as a means of expanding their previous area of responsibility and taking it to the next level (e.g., I4, I1).

In many cases, the incumbent team and rector are also an important aspect: "I really wanted to work in this team." (I22) The knowledge that the rector and the team in the rectorate will be able to successfully change things and reshape the university is a decisive element, especially if the new vice rector and rector have already worked together in the past. "I was also aware that I would be able to achieve a great deal by working with this rector. I knew I would have his support and backing." (I11)

The working relationship is another crucial factor. "I got a good feeling from all the candidates who asked me about this. So I really felt that we would work well together." (I2)

Although some of the mentioned ideas for modernizing the university contain an easy to detect gender dimension (e.g., improving workplace quality), explicit gender equality priorities were only rarely formulated. Our interview partners rather support the goal of descriptive representation, e.g., when Feminists associate the rectorate position with the goal of making women visible or serving as role models "so that the people around get used to women". (I6)

3.4. Responsibility for Advancement of Women and Gender Mainstreaming

In the cases of some of our interviewees, competence for gender equality, the advancement of women and/or diversity is formally defined as part of their position, i.e., they head vice rectorates whose names indicate this fact. All of these women embrace this and see these topics as priorities for the rectorate. Indeed, they view the existence of a vice rectorate for the advancement of women, gender equality, and diversity as affirmation of the university's commitment to these topics. Referring to them in the vice rectorate's name demonstrates this commitment to the outside world and increases its effectiveness within the university itself. (I5)

Despite the formal assignment of competence for the advancement of women and gender equality to a particular vice rectorate, some vice rectors stress that these tasks are also the responsibility of the rectorate as a whole (I4) or are extremely important to the rector. Some even describe them as "a clear matter for senior management" (e.g., I2, I3, I14). The explicit assignment to one vice rectorate underscores their relevance and establishes a concrete point of contact.

Regardless of whether these topics are formally assigned to one vice rector, and she takes clear action during her term of office, most of the vice rectors concerned did not actively seek this responsibility. "Somebody has to do it. But it was also something that interested me." (I13) "So I just did it." (I18)

Those interviewees who were formally assigned this competence pursued different priorities in this regard during their terms of office (e.g., advancement of women, involvement of fathers in unpaid work, changes to processes to break down gender biases, strengthening or formalization of gender

research). These priorities and the concrete measures taken depend both on the level of importance placed on gender equality at the respective university when these women were appointed to the rectorate as well as on their own corresponding experience. Those working at universities with longer traditions of gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women and/or those with expertise in these fields (e.g., through participation in a working group for equal opportunities or knowledge of gender research) build on existing structures and seek to work with the existing structures and experts at their universities.

Our interviewees describe the combination of formal assignment of competence to a vice rectorate and strong commitment in the rectorate as a whole as an ideal scenario. One interviewee calls for competence for gender equality and diversity to be anchored as a mainstream topic in the rectorate and does not consider this to be at odds with having a designated vice rectorate. (I5)

At the other end of the scale are the interviewees who were not formally responsible for gender equality, advancement of women or diversity, and had not wanted this to be the case. "It was relatively clear that these tasks would not fit in any way with my portfolio." (I12)

Some of the interviewees voiced clear reservations towards the advancement of women or specific measures (e.g., the quota regulation). Some of them pointed out that their university already had experts in this field (e.g., the working group for equal opportunities), who were actively pursuing the achievement of gender equality. "My dear colleague [name] and others are actively working on equal opportunities. [...] They've always been very energetic in this regard and are working hard to move things forward." (I12)

Since this expertise was already available outside the rectorate, the interviewees saw no need to anchor gender equality "as an appendage in the rectorate". It also became clear that the advancement of women and/or gender equality was not a priority in their rectorates.

"I am a feminist at heart, but we didn't even think about institutionalizing the topic. [...] We had so many other things to do that were of higher priority." (I17)

Formal competence or non-competence for the advancement of women, gender equality, and/or diversity cannot be equated with a feminist background or gender expertise (or lack thereof). While most of the interviewees with formal competence for these topics do have a feminist background, some of those without this formal competence are also feminists and/or gender experts. Regardless of their formal competence, those women who see themselves as feminists seek to change structures and processes in their area of responsibility and take a closer look at the situation there both for women and men. They also realize that people expect female managers to adopt a different style of management to men. "Even our young colleagues expected that of me." (I19)

Problematic in this context, however, are the generalizations with which female rectors or vice rectors are frequently confronted, for instance when the gender equality problem is deemed to be resolved with the appointment of a woman and definition of women as "role models" or when women in rectorate positions are expected to change the system and "do something for women". "As a woman in such a role, you are basically always the one who is subject to inadmissible generalizations like [...] 'We've got a woman now, she should do that' or 'You're the role model now—that should be enough'." (I13)

One interviewee lamented the lack of discourse on gender equality in universities and higher education management, thus also pointing to the lack of gender competence in the rectorate as well as an unwillingness to reflect on traditional practices.

"In my opinion, we have to be able to talk about these issues. In other words, we have to be able to say 'Ok, yes, that's discrimination' and not 'Oh, she doesn't want to apply' or 'She's too much of a coward' or 'She's too lazy'. Instead I expect genuine discourse, so we can find out what the reasons might be and what we can do to resolve them. [...] We can't change everything, I know that, but we can at least take a closer look at those things that are in our control." (I20)

Views on the quota regulation or duty to advance women are good examples of the lack of gender competence or reflection mentioned in the previous quote. Interviewees with a feminist background

and/or gender expertise view the quota regulation as a necessary instrument to raise the share of women in management positions.

"That's just how it [the statutory quota] works and these women are there. Full stop. You just have to find them." (I10)

"There are two things I find really, really important: quotas and structures—oh yes, definitely quotas […] The quotas and structures are important and help to create awareness […] Raising awareness is well and good, but if there are no structures, then it is all to no end." (I15)

"We always act as if a 'quota woman' is something bad, because as long as I actually say that I strive for excellence and quality, people can't get upset when things are done to ensure the quotas are met. I just make sure we don't drop our quality standards. […] Ultimately, she'll be judged on her performance." (I4)

At the other end of the scale are the interviewees who think that the duty to promote women or quota regulations undermine quality standards and who distance themselves strictly from them.

"We can't have the situation—and 've always spoken out against this—that I will only make the quota if I take them all without thinking about their qualifications. I've always rejected that—and made myself plenty of enemies in the process. […] So I was quite happy that I didn't have so much to do with all those gender issues because I simply had a different approach." (I8)

4. Discussion and Conclusions

With the introduction of a statutory quota regulation, Austria succeeded in significantly raising the participation of women in university management functions in a short period of time. In the meantime, women make up almost half of all rectorate members. According to Childs and Krook (2008), descriptive representation of women in rectorate improved. However, there are still some gender-specific aspects to higher education management functions and careers. On average, women are younger than men when they first assume a position in a rectorate. They are also less likely to move to such a position from a professorship. This means that women move into the rectorate either from mid-level academic positions or as external experts. Although more and more women are assuming rectorate positions, they are less likely to succeed in pursuing a career in higher education management, i.e., successfully applying for a rectorship or transferring to the rectorate in another university.

The increasing female participation in top positions first and foremost indicates that access barriers for women to these positions have been successfully dismantled. Gender expertise or competence in gender equality only appear to have played a limited role in their entry to the rectorate. They also did not explicitly raise the topic of gender equality in connection with their will to bring about change. Nonetheless, some of the interviewees are conscious of their role model effect and try to ensure that discriminatory structures are broken down in their own specific area of responsibility. Consequently, increasing descriptive representation does not automatically improve substantive representation. Neither the formulation of the quota regulation (§ 20a UG Universities Act 2002) nor its general implementation especially addressed cultural or structural change. This is not an explicit goal of the quota regulation but rather an expectation that was expressed in the parliamentary debate on the Amendment to the Universities Act 2002 yet did not actually feature in its actual text or its legal commentaries. Thus, the extent to which the participation of women in higher education management also leads to structural and cultural changes is essentially a matter of chance. It depends on whether these women have prior gender or gender equality expertise or at least recognize and are open to gender equality issues. If this is the case—and the other members of the rectorate share this awareness—women in rectorate positions can achieve a great deal for gender equality and trigger steps towards structural and cultural change.

This tacit expectation without concrete authority harbors the risk that women in rectorate positions will be automatically assigned responsibility for gender equality and cultural change at universities and thus also saddled with the corresponding load. Helen Peterson (2015) describes this risk of overload as a potential exploitation of women "in the name of gender". This risk of overload or failure is especially

prevalent when gender equality and cultural change are not viewed as the task of the rectorate and instead remain restricted to areas under the competence of women. In other words, when no need for change is seen to exist in broad areas of the university.

This limited effect of the increasing female participation on cultural or structural change is also exacerbated by the fact that women switch less often than men from a professorship to a position in the rectorate. They thus cannot act with the authority of a professorship behind them and presumably encounter less acceptance and more resistance within the university—especially among professors and senior academics—when it comes to questioning or changing procedures related to academic affairs, e.g., the selection process for scientific staff.

Nonetheless, it can still be assumed that women in the rectorate—especially those with gender and equal opportunities expertise or a feminist background—open up great potential for cultural and structural change in universities. However, in order to ensure that this potential can actually develop, specific framework conditions must be created.

First and foremost, gender equality policy has to distinguish between the goals to increase descriptive representation and substantive representation. While the first goal is anchored in gender equality policy the second one isn't. For instance, cultural and structural change has not been formulated as a higher education policy goal in the dialogue with universities. Current higher education policy steering instruments, e.g., the performance agreements between the universities and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (Nickel 2007), prioritize descriptive representation by formulating quantifiable gender equality goals (e.g., increasing the share of female professors), thus pushing qualitative goals into the background. However, and despite the fact that cultural and structural change is a formulated goal in Austrian higher education policy strategy documents like the ERA Roadmap (BMWFW Federal Ministry for Science, Research and the Economy), it has not been incorporated into the steering instruments. To achieve this, the existing policies would have to be extended in the "bifocal sense" proposed by Jen de Vries (De Vries 2012). She uses the metaphor of bifocal spectacle lenses to represent the need for individual development (the near focus) to be linked to organizational development (the distant focus). In organizational terms, this translates into keeping the near focus on individuals and the distant focus on organizational change, both clearly in view. This seems to be essential for organizations wishing to address culture change issues with a focus on gender equality. Regarding the conceptualization of concrete policies the bifocal approach represents a feminist intervention strategy and an alternative means of countering gender inequalities in organizations (De Vries and Brink 2016). Thus, even if individuals (i.e., women) are mainly addressed by policies, the structural dimension has to be considered explicitly in policy design and implementation as already mentioned.

Hence, to forge ahead with the goal of cultural change in science and research, gender competence and expertise in the rectorate is a necessity. Gender competence should be a prerequisite for all rectorate members regardless of their gender. In other words, they should all have fundamental knowledge of gender as a social construct, understand the key gender differences in science and research and be willing to work towards gender equality goals. As a consequence, gender competence should be a required qualification for rectorate positions and should be verified in the selection process.

This would, in turn, also require the inclusion of gender competence in training and qualification programs for higher education managers. None of the programs available in Austria currently do so (for an overview, see Wroblewski 2018). There are also no programs specifically targeted at women who hold or wish to apply for a position in higher education management like those already on offer in the United Kingdom (e.g., Leadership Foundation for Higher Education 2017; Barnard et al. 2016), Australia (e.g., White 2015), New Zealand (e.g., Harris and Leberman 2012) or Sweden (e.g., Barnard and Peterson 2016; Blom 2010). Austria therefore also has an urgent need to catch up in this regard in order to promote professional higher education management and make use of the potential afforded by women to develop its universities further.

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