REMOVING STICKY FLOORS IN ACADEMIA: A DIRECTORY OF BEST PRACTISE

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Abstract

The increasing awareness of the need for greater workplace equity and diversity has led to a demand for initiatives that will lead to more equitable outcomes. Many institutions have created equity and diversity positions within their workforce whose role is to enhance the workplace culture and remove bias. Practitioners of gender base change management need tools to implement in order to facilitate organisational cultural change.

In this paper, we will introduce the concept of a directory/library of organisational best practice that can be used within an organisation to allow managers to adopt policies suitable for the stage of change in which they are operating.

The concept of an organisational directory will be illustrated by showing the RMIT University Policy Library. Within the higher education context, and particularly in STEM-based areas, there is a push towards actively working to increase diversity, promote inclusion, and improve outcomes for female staff. This document was developed by the RMIT Women Researchers Network (WRN), with support from multiple Schools from across the University, with the objective of developing a library of gender equity policies that School Executive Committees can choose to adopt for their School or adapt to their own School’s needs.

All the policies in the library are all already in practice in some form in some Schools. The aim of the library is to share this practice. However, it is expected that not all policies will be appropriate in all Schools. Schools’ differing levels of gender equity development, strategic aims, and specific circumstances mean not all policies will be appropriate for all workplaces.

The policies are intended to complement and be consistent with gender equity policies and schemes activities at the College and University level, such as SAGE Athena SWAN. As a result, the suggested policies are primarily designed to be actions that Schools can take unilaterally, perhaps with input from other units, such as HR.

Each policy is broken down into four sections:
1. A broad policy area;
2. A commentary on some considerations for that policy;
3. Information about monitoring the effectiveness of the policy; and
4. An example policy wording. Emphasis is placed on monitoring and uptake of policies and policy outcomes, to ensure policies are in fact affecting increased gender equity outcomes.

Libraries of this kind are influential as they collect internal actions already in place within an organisation. This gives managers the confidence that they are appropriate and tested within their organisation. There is also a need to act like others and so managers will be heavily influenced to undertake activities that others in the organisation are already engaging in. Exemplar wording is especially important in an area that has complex labour laws and where mistakes can be costly to a company in terms of legal proceedings brought by employees or simply in terms of reputations as equitable employers.

Such directories are envisaged as an online resource where managers can instantly access ideas, and new workplace initiatives can be added as equity improves and managers gain confidence taking actions in the equity and diversity arena.

Keywords: Gender equity.