

To Boldly Go Where No Woman Has Gone Before:

Understanding Resistance to Change in Gender Segregated Organizations – A Case Study at a University of Technology

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The Vienna University of Technology (VUT) experiences high horizontal and vertical gender segregation as well as high drop-out rates for female students and scientists. Efforts to attract more female students and to achieve higher gender diversity along the career path have not yet delivered the desired results. It is suggested that the lack of gender awareness of decision makers as well as gendered organizational processes and decision-making result in a resistance to change toward effective diversity management.

With a triangulation approach, we examine the leaky pipeline at VUT: The sub-study "Austria's next top scientist" investigates implicit and explicit selection criteria in an experimental setting to assess whether recruitment practices are impartial. "Strange new worlds" examines the current organizational members' perceptions of working culture, climate and conflicts from a gender perspective. "Gender counts?!" aims to quantify the effect of demographic factors on drop-out probability with student data from 1998 to 2010. Finally, in "The journey and its own reward", biographic interviews reveal career/exit options and obstacles women face at VUT.

Preliminary results indicate substantial gender discrimination in organizational processes and decision-making at all hierarchical levels. The odds for female students to finish their studies at VUT are substantially lower than for their male peers. Furthermore, decision makers at VUT suffer from (unconscious) gender biases in recruiting decisions and along the career path, women are offered less development perspectives, informal mentoring and job opportunities than their male peers. It is suggested that increasing the awareness about gendered processes by implementing mandatory gender trainings for faculty can reduce (unconscious) gender discrimination.