Notes from Discussion section on biology, chemistry and history of science

5 November 2019

There were 12 attendees, 9 female, 3 male

Recommendations

Task 1

1. further investigation – why women are less happy with supervisor – cross with gender of advisor (is it because supervisor is male?)
2. interruptions – can be more common for Ph.D. programs that take a long time to complete. Was the length of time of an interruption defined in the survey? Recommend to define in further surveys on the subject. For example, a two-week interruption may not have any effect, but six months or more would be significant. The SAGA D+B survey defined an interruption as six months or more. Perhaps men's interruptions were too short to be counted?
3. Career progression – progress in science is not linear, but rather stepwise. The amount of time needed to complete a research project can be lengthy in some fields.
4. An attendee of this discussion from the Philippines described the country's program for public universities. 2 years of postdoctoral work in the Philippines must be completed (years of service) as part of scholarship or in government service to study abroad. this reduces "brain drain", but is a reason for slow progression in careers.
5. Differences in philosophy of salary for men/women in different countries. In Turkey, pay and promotions are equitable across men and women. In CNRS to be promoted one needs to apply for promotion, but women tend not to apply as often as men.
6. Discrimination by age – investigate the effect of respondent's age on their response. The results in the survey were disturbingly high, and reasons for the responses should be investigated within the data where possible.
7. Discrimination – check whether respondents were answering the questions based on personal experience or experiences of others. If the latter, why didn't men notice women colleagues' experiences about discrimination as much as women did?
8. Married couples – does the higher earner affect the career progression of the lower earner; that is, for example, is there greater amount of career interruption for the lower earner if the couple or family follows the career opportunities of the higher earner?
9. harassment – how many victims reported this in the survey? Were experiences of harassment underreported? A definition of the term "harassment" would have been helpful in encouraging reporting by respondents.
10. Organizations should be encouraged to provide well-defined policy on harassment in their workplaces, and training on harassment for new staff, faculty and students.
11. There should be safeguards for those who report instances of discrimination or harassment.
12. Was the term "significantly" sufficiently defined in survey questions about time needed for child care? a table of definitions for such terms would be helpful.

Task 2

13. Journals should be encouraged to standardize the order in which author's names are listed.
14. Continue task 2 work (analyses of publication patterns) if possible to use Chemical Abstracts (chemistry) and biology using a database mentioned during this meeting.
15. Compare the numbers of women employed with the numbers and percentages of women who publish articles.

Task 3

16. Some additional task 3 resources: EU toolbox on gender equality in academia and research, EIGE web site

Questions and comments

17. real difference in field? has effect size analysis been done? statistical significance might not be meaningful. All may be perception and personal experience, not "real differences between men and women"
18. university cultures – demanding of graduate students, no positive feedback
19. does "fairness" mean "equity"? did translations of the survey into other languages account for nuances? "equity" might be a more useful term for future questions. Gender differences in the answers to these questions may have to do with how many people a student worked with, or women being more attentive to human dimensions in interactions with peers.
20. Career progression - Did respondents from industry reply differently from academics. Recommend to explore in the task 1 data.
21. parenthood – women still feel need for greater time for parental leave – how can the culture be changed to allow for this without negative impact on career progression?
22. Do parental leaves and other family-related leaves affect tenure decisions? Are there differences between countries?
23. Availability of child care differs from country to country, and expectations for child care needs differ as well.
24. Do parental leaves and other family-related leaves affect tenure decisions? Are there differences between countries?
25. Trend toward interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity in science – harder to get a job in these areas and to assess competency and accomplishments for tenure, etc.
26. is affirmative action for women a good approach? Perhaps double-blind application review process for positions would lead to greater numbers of female hires.