



Review of gender disparity at LUSEM

Laurie Cohen
Nottingham University Business School and
Guest Professor at LUSEM

Ellen Hillbom
LUSEM

Summary

In 2014 Lund University reported that the School of Economics and Management (LUSEM) faced challenges regarding gender equality among senior staff and specifically pointed to the share of female professors being only 10 percent. Despite the faculty contesting the low number as erroneous, LUSEM was described by the university as a 'single-sex faculty' negatively affecting the overall statistics. In light of this, LUSEM was tasked with improving its performance with respect to the statistics on share of female professors.

Consequently, LUSEM senior management engaged Laurie Cohen, guest professor from Nottingham University, and Ellen Hillbom, chairperson of the faculty's Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Committee, to lead an investigation into potential explanations for the low proportion of female professors. During the autumn semester of 2015 Cohen and Hillbom therefore conducted a review of explanations offered for gender disparity at LUSEM and the results are presented in this report.

The purpose and scope of the review was threefold: first, it was to get a 'snapshot' of where women and men are placed in LUSEM's structures; second, it was to gain insights into how colleagues explain the gender disparity in LUSEM's professoriate, and more generally into how gender plays out in the school's practices and processes. The intention was not to 'uncover' some objective reality, but to appreciate the various ways in which people positioned differently within the school made sense of and accounted for their experiences. The third purpose was to highlight salient issues in moving forward.

In this document we report mainly on the qualitative part of the review, using some quantitative information to contextualize colleagues' accounts. A few points to note. First, this was never intended as a research project, but as a review process, and it was on this basis that colleagues agreed to participate. Unlike qualitative research, we did not record conversations or produce verbatim transcripts. Instead, we took notes which we then collated and summarized. Second, reviews carried out in one's place of work inevitably raise sensitivities and concerns. Colleagues were keen to share their experiences, but wary of speaking 'out of turn', or of causing controversy. In line with our established practices, we assured them of confidentiality and anonymity. We listened to people's detailed stories in order to elicit important themes and issues, but reassured participants that we would not be presenting personalized responses. Those colleagues who regularly read qualitative research might therefore find our results a bit bland, while those more immersed in quantitative traditions might bemoan what they see as a lack of 'evidence'. We can understand these concerns, but hope that readers appreciate the sensitivity of the process, and can nevertheless find some 'truth' (localized, contextualized) in the issues we raise.

Emerging issues

- 1) Gender discrepancies are present at LUSEM and in this environment generally women find it harder to pursue academic careers than men do. These discrepancies negatively affect the work environment at the school. There is a consensus among staff that a more gender equal environment would be beneficial as it would capture and encourage talent which is currently being lost, and make LUSEM a more attractive place to work.
- 2) There are few formal hindrances to women's advancement to professor at LUSEM. Neither the teaching load nor faculty financed research appears to be allocated in a way that negatively affects women's research careers. In this respect, differences between various categories of staff (PhDs, postdocs, adjuncts, assistant professors, associate professors and professors) seem to matter more than gender.
- 3) The obstacles for women's careers are linked to male dominated networks and processes of homophily in which senior men informally support and sponsor junior men, to the exclusion

of women. This has implications for established practices, such as recruitment, allocation of PhD supervision, encouragement to apply for external funding, and career planning. The disproportionate number of men in management positions in LUSEM departments and the faculty, as well as at associate professor and professor levels, is seen to contribute to the ongoing reproduction of these patterns.

- 4) Through open and continuous discussion and reflection on how our established processes and practices (such as those noted above) affect gender equality, we can raise our collective awareness of these issues. This could create opportunities for significant change.

Structure of the review report

The report starts off by setting the scene, highlighting the importance of having a gender balanced staff, with women well-represented at all levels, and in both research and management. It goes on to describe the review process, followed by a presentation of emerging issues. In the final section we offer some further considerations.

Introduction

There is a consensus that gender equality in academia is crucial to creating an environment in which excellence in research and teaching is rewarded, innovation and creativity thrive and in which people feel enabled to pursue their career aspirations (Van den Brink, Benschop & Jansen, 2010). In this light, LUSEM's recent performance in the university's equality league table was a call to action. In order to effectively address the problem, it is of course necessary to understand it. To this end, between September and December 2015, Ellen Hillbom and Laurie Cohen conducted a two-part review of gender and career progression at LUSEM. The first consisted of gathering quantitative information which provided a 'snapshot' of where women and men are positioned within LUSEM's structures. The second, qualitative element considered how LUSEM colleagues make sense of the current gender disparity, their experiences of career-making in the faculty, and explored possible avenues for change.

Review process

We collected both quantitative information and qualitative accounts. What follows reports on both, identifying key patterns and themes arising from the quantitative material, and using the discussions to develop insights into colleagues' perceptions and experiences.

The quantitative component included information from the six departments at LUSEM – Business Administration, Business Law, Economic History, Economics, Informatics and Statistics. The following details were collected per department:

- Staff – number of professors, associate professors, adjuncts, assistant professors, postdocs and PhD candidates, female and male respectively.
- Funding - % of time covered by faculty funded research, external funding and teaching.
- Research – principle investigator and co-investigator for larger research projects.
- PhD program – lead supervisor, co-supervisor, teaching at PhD courses.
- Teaching allocation – undergraduate, masters, bachelor and master thesis supervision, external teaching, program directors and course responsibility.

The material provides a snapshot of the state of affairs during 2015 and does not include changes over time. We therefore expect some variation in these figures as time goes by. Notably, two departments, Informatics and Statistics, have no female staff with tenure, and very few women PhD students and guest researchers. The emerging issues therefore must be considered in this light.

The qualitative component of the review was based on two rounds of focus group and individual discussions. In the first round we met with individuals representing senior management in the departments and in the faculty, and in the second round discussions were held with various categories of staff, both female and male. Below is the list of individuals engaged in the review process, described broadly to preserve their anonymity, as promised:

Faculty Senior Management

Directors of Studies (all departments)

Directors of Graduate Studies (all departments where applicable)

Heads of Departments (all departments)

Female Professors (4 individuals representing 3 departments)

Assistant and Associate Professors (6 women and 6 men representing all departments)

Post Docs and PhD Candidates (5 women and 2 men representing 3 departments)

Allocation of duties and responsibilities

The 'teaching trap'

Our investigation includes information on: 1) % of total bachelor level teaching; 2) % of total advanced level teaching; 3) % of total undergraduate level thesis supervision; 4) number of master program directors and 5) number of course conveners at bachelor and advanced levels. The numbers are reported per staff category of professors, associate professors, assistant professors, post docs, adjunct and PhDs, male and female respectively.

Before setting up the study it was suggested that one contributing factor explaining the challenges women face in advancing academic careers is that they often have higher teaching loads than their male colleagues. The idea is that this distracts them from research, including applying for funding and publishing – both of which are essential for promotion. However, our material shows no evidence for a so-called 'teaching trap' at LUSEM. We did not detect any clear gender disparities with respect to teaching allocation. Indeed, in some instances, such as among associate professors in both Economic History and Economics, men teach more than their female counterparts.

However, disparities between categories exist. Adjuncts, which is a teaching position held by academic staff not having completed a doctoral degree, carries the heaviest teaching load. This is to be expected given the nature of the position. To an extent, it seems to be the case that more senior colleagues do less teaching, but these differences are minor. A few cohorts, such as male professors and assistant professors in Business Administration do more external teaching. Whilst participants did not offer definitive views on this, there was a suggestion that some of this teaching carried both some economic benefits and greater status.

Management positions

Researchers have found that the composition of senior management can have important consequences for gender equality (Fagan, González Menéndez, & Gómez Ansón, 2012; Ely and Thomas, 2001; Walby, 2005). At LUSEM, however, women are significantly under-represented in senior management positions: (a) three out of five members of the faculty senior management team are men; (b) five out of six Heads of Department are men and the one woman is temporary, acting on behalf of a man who is on leave; (c) five out of six people in charge of the PhD programs are men; and (d) four out of six Directors of Studies are men. This indicates a clear male dominance in senior management at both faculty and department level. Whilst we did not find evidence of direct discrimination, respondents spoke of the current state of affairs as a consequence of informal networks, homophily, traditions, and a general lack of change. It was also pointed out that the low share of women in senior roles generally meant that it was more difficult to find female candidates for managerial positions. Some colleagues were particularly concerned about what they saw as

limited transparency in the ways in which these positions were allocated, and about the implications of the current pattern. This was not only linked to gender equality within the school, but also to LUSEM's potential for innovation, creativity, responsiveness, dynamism and, notably, for its reputation, both within the university and externally.

PhD supervision

It is important to note that principles for admitting students to the PhD programs differ significantly between departments, as do principles for allocation of PhD supervision. These variations limit our opportunities to compare departments. However, several issues arose in our discussions which seemed to transcend departmental differences – most particularly the new rule regarding PhD supervision and promotion to professor.

In 2011 LUSEM changed the guidelines for faculty staff seeking promotion from associate professor to professor. The changes included a new requirement for candidates to have been the principal supervisor for at least two PhD candidates through to successful completion. Previously the rule had been one completion, and prior to that there was more flexibility around supervisory positions. During the discussions the pros and cons of the new arrangements were discussed at length. It is clear that individuals saw this requirement as the most difficult obstacle to advancement. Furthermore, several colleagues felt that the reform would hit women harder than men. Notably, the reverse was never suggested. Further, it was pointed out that the reform also hit certain departments and research groups harder than others and it was therefore a more complex issue than being only related to gender.

The new guidelines were understood as an attempt to slow down associate professors' career advancement. In several departments, the bulk of the PhD supervision was in the hands of professors who are typically men, either because they are already experienced supervisors or because they are the principle investigators on research projects which are funding the PhDs. People envisaged that the new arrangements would lead to the emergence of a group of unhappy associate professors who saw themselves as highly eligible, but still unable to advance. And many suggested that within this group there would inevitably be a significant number of women. Participants expected that over time this barrier would create resentment, and result in LUSEM associate professors leaving to develop their careers elsewhere. Proponents of the new requirement did not share the view. To them it was based on merit, and on LUSEM's continued pursuit of excellence. The solution, in their eyes, was for associate professors to generate their own research funding and hire their own PhDs. Others saw this as a very demanding, competitive and time consuming process.

Several participants thought that these arrangements were disproportionately affecting women's advancement. In several departments, it seems that PhD supervision is typically allocated through informal arrangements. In the spirit of homophily, and with male professors routinely promoting the interests of their male colleagues, women are passed over. The problem, they explained, is that women often lack the concrete sponsorship from male professors that they need to become PhD supervisors. This is exacerbated by the lack of women in senior management positions, noted above. The Director of Graduate Studies is arguably in a position to influence this allocation. However, with men occupying five out of six of these positions, some colleagues felt that DoGs (perhaps unwittingly) contribute to this on-going pattern. While some participants were convinced that such discrimination was unintentional and even un-noticed, they were adamant that without considered intervention, it would continue.

The quantitative material confirms these accounts, highlighting that with the exception of Economic History, PhD supervision (both principle and co-supervisor) is primarily in the hands of seniors colleagues: i.e., male professors. This would suggest that associate professors, and women associate

professors in particular, have good reason to believe that the promotion requirement represents a significant career hurdle.

NOTE: The above mentioned critique has been noted by the faculty senior management and the requirement to be principle rather than co-supervisor was toned down by the Faculty Board on its meeting 4 March 2016, i.e. after the interviews were conducted and the initial writing of the present report.

Research funding

Faculty sponsored research funding is used in different ways in LUSEM's various departments. An important part is allocated for the hiring of PhD candidates, but there are also other research positions such as postdocs, and part of the funding is used for paying part of professors' salaries, especially the ones hired before the professorial promotion reforms. While there are differences between staff categories, e.g. more faculty sponsored research funding going to PhDs than assistant professors in some departments, it is not possible to tie this to gender differences.

Generating external research funding is an important aspect of securing more research time, employing PhD candidates, and generally developing a strong research profile: all of which are essential to academic career advancement. The numbers show significant generational differences in most departments. External research funds are secured primarily by professors and to some lesser extent associate professors. Notably, because these positions are mainly dominated by men, it follows that men control most of LUSEM's external research funding. While some participants explained that this pattern is only indirectly related to gender, others suggested that it reflects long-standing processes in which people formally and informally support and sponsors colleagues similar to themselves, thus reproducing these inequalities over and over again. The concentration of men at the top of the pyramid is a general indication that female associate and assistant professors might well face difficulties in establishing themselves as promising candidates for promotion. From this perspective, although this gendered pattern of research funding, sponsorship and ultimately advancement is not intentional, unless LUSEM intervenes to break the cycle, it will persist.

Recruitment

Recruitment strategies appear to be key for adjusting gender balances. While on a formal level LUSEM's recruitment processes seem to be quite transparent, many participants felt that there was a parallel, informal process that reflected old traditions and continued to reproduce old patterns. For example, while at the faculty level there are expectations of gender representativeness in the recruitment process (Läroförslagsnämnden), this is not necessarily so at the department level, where recruitment committees in many cases are male dominated, and in some without female representation all together. Notwithstanding that there are restricting regulations guiding recruitment, several colleagues still described a process which often lead to 'safe', but unexciting and unambitious appointment decisions. Participants felt that a variation in representation within the recruitment committees, especially involving women more centrally in the processes was not only fair, but it could also lead to more critical examination of criteria and perspectives on who to hire and on what basis, leading to a more diverse range of potential candidates.

Furthermore, although the Faculty Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Plan states that care should be taken every time a tenure position is made public, this is often not the case. An argument heard over and over is that: "It does not matter how we advertise, there are just no women active in this field and therefore no women to recruit. And women don't want to come to Lund." We have to ask if this is a statement based on reproducing 'myths' or conclusions reached after significant effort to reach women.

Informal networks

As we have noted, there was a general agreement that the causes of gender inequalities at LUSEM can primarily be found in the informal networks and less in the formal systems. A very important aspect of these informal networks is how they contribute to the reproduction of existing 'types' through homophily, to the inclusion of some and exclusion of others. Importantly, informal networks do not necessarily follow strict gender lines, in the sense that not all men are on the inside and all women are on the outside. Some men said that they feel excluded, while some women said that they feel very welcomed and included by senior men.

Notwithstanding some colleagues' experiences of inclusion at LUSEM, it is striking how many commented on the presence and persistence of homophily: the idea that similarity fosters connection. They spoke of the creation of tight friendships in the form of 'men's clubs' and how the informal rules for interaction between men and women tend to exclude, or at least to marginalize, women. In part, this relates to what is considered to be appropriate behavior, and this was seen to be linked to gender. For example, while much networking (and arguably career building) happens in free time at conferences and social get-togethers, women do not feel that they can approach senior men or spend too much time with them without this being misconstrued. As one woman phrased it: "At a conference I cannot ask the leading professor to go for a drink after work, but my male colleagues can do that. This means that I am losing out on opportunities to network." Given that academia in general is a male dominated world, this hits women harder than men. Thus women are faced with a paradox: in academia, career-making is partly a matter of informal networks and relationships, but for women the consequences of being misunderstood, or having one's intentions misconstrued, are significant. Importantly, because academia is seen to be open and inclusive, and this behavior is a matter of social convention rather than explicit rule, much of it passes under the radar, and thus simply carries on.

Another expression of homophily discussed by our participants is the way in which junior men are informally mentored and sponsored by senior colleagues. There was sense that senior men appeared to feel comfortable with junior, male colleagues who reminded them of themselves, and tended to develop professional relationships along these lines. This pattern was recognized, not only by PhD students, postdocs and assistant professors, but also by associate professors and professors who said that as early career researchers they themselves had been sponsored by senior men, and that this had been a crucial factor in their career progression. Men and women in several departments thought it was easy to identify those colleagues who 'belonged' to groups seen to be close to 'centers of power', be they management teams or research groups. Furthermore, they suggested that these groups could become tight and exclusive – difficult for 'outsiders' to access. Although such groups were initially professional, over time they developed into friendships. While this is of course a feature of organizational life, because these networks appeared to be closely linked to practices of professional inclusion and exclusion, and were connected to people's career opportunities, many participants saw them as problematic.

Notably, some participants highlighted that in certain LUSEM settings, these informal, exclusionary practices were manifested e.g. in the form of corridor gossip or biased criteria in the allocation of funding and created additional obstacles for women to navigate in promotion processes. Such types of behavior were described as insidious, not only in and of themselves, but because they were seen to be condoned by some senior men.

Combining work and personal spheres

Several male colleagues suggested that the family situation generally, and motherhood specifically, was at the heart of LUSEM's gendered patterns of advancement. Women participants did not agree. Rather, there were many variations on the role played by the family or private sphere; different factors such as the age of children, the relationship between a woman and her partner, the extent to which the partner works etc. influenced the answers. It is also important to mention that the challenges of combining workplace expectations, and in particular conforming to notions of the ideal researcher (working out of hours and with high levels of mobility), was not exclusive to women. Men with families likewise struggled to find a balance between work and private obligations. As one man stated: "It is equally important to me to be a good father."

However, what mattered was what type of support system scholars had around them, both in the work place and at home. When the individual got support, both practically and emotionally, s/he would find it easier to live up to expectations and find satisfaction both at work and in the private sphere, and be able to progress in career terms.

Further considerations

Based on the concerns that emerged in our review, we offer the following issues for LUSEM to consider.

Pursuing the agenda

- Research shows that for any gender equality to gain legitimacy and be efficient it needs to be anchored at the highest levels in the organization (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Walby, 2005; Bendl, R., Bleijenburgh, I., Henttonen, E. & Mills, J., 2015). To affect lasting change, the LUSEM gender equality agenda needs to be championed and led by senior management, and it is critical that men are fundamentally involved.
- Gender equality needs to be fully integrated into LUSEM's strategy at all levels. Consider the use of targets to ensure that gender is considered across all of the school's policies, processes and practices, and to embed new initiatives.

Roles and responsibilities

- Consider the allocation of management roles and responsibilities, at both faculty and departmental levels. It is important to have women more strongly represented in LUSEM management structures, e.g. Directors of Studies, Directors of Graduate Studies, Deputy Heads of Department, Heads of Departments.
- If LUSEM agrees that it is important to redress the current gender imbalance amongst our professoriate, then a reconsideration of the promotion requirements is warranted, as is a review of how PhD supervision is distributed. Although we have not found any indications that the formal systems of allocation are discriminating against women, it would be worthwhile for departments to take into consideration whether informal structures and the practical working of the system actually favours men over women and, if there is a will, to intervene, and to actively use the system to instigate change. This could involve the use of targets, and rewards for departments who meet or exceed them. In some Lund University faculties, this seems to have been effective.

Career support and mentorship

- Ensure that formal career support is available for junior colleagues. This could involve formalizing existing responsibilities, or creating new roles for mentors or coaches.
- Develop a mentorship/sponsorship programme. This should be for all staff, but there could also be women-only provision. LUSEM staff could e.g. be encouraged to participate in the Lund University WINGS program.

- Informal career support is important. LUSEM colleagues could all benefit from leadership that demonstrates flexibility and an appreciation of colleagues' competing demands. In addition to structural arrangements, effort could be put into creating a responsive work environment where colleagues to a higher degree get positive feedback, feel encouraged and valued.

Recruitment

- Ensuring gender representation in the recruitment process was seen to be a feasible adjustment for departments, with potentially significant impact, especially at the level of PhD and postdoc where the departments are free to recruit without the involvement of the faculty.
- Becoming more systematic in our efforts to encourage women to apply and targeting individuals outside of our traditional networks, whether that is for PhD or professor recruitment, could provide us with opportunities to hire more women. Here the faculty has a key role to play in ensuring that departments adhere to LUSEM's stated guidelines.
- While the recruitment of female professors and lecturers is not a permanent solution for gender equality, it has proven an important strategy for diversifying within male dominated environments. This might be considered as a first step towards recruiting for tenure positions. However, for these new appointees to thrive, build teams and make a long-term commitment to LUSEM, this must be sustainable, and integrated with other initiatives (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012).

Combining work and personal spheres

- Ensure that colleagues due to take parental leave have the opportunity to discuss arrangements for how they want to relate to LUSEM during their absence.
- Consider arrangements that will enable colleagues to immediately re-engage with their research upon their return.
- Think about adopting a 'core-hours' structure in which key faculty and department business is done between, for example, 9:00 and 16:00, to accommodate colleagues' domestic responsibilities.

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