

## **The Challenge of Gender in Higher Education: Processes and Practices**

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### **Abstract**

Drawing on Hearn's (1999:125) idea that managers are involved in the 'creation of knowledges...indeed of what counts as knowledge', this article focuses on Irish Universities as creators and evaluators of knowledge'. Using primary and secondary data, content analysis of policies related to education and fifteen years reflexive participation in such structures, the paper describes a pattern of continuity in the male dominated nature of Irish Universities academic, managerial and governance structures, despite dramatic changes in the overall student and faculty profile. Then, drawing on Bolton and Munzio's (2007) work on processes and Connell's typology of masculinities, it uses a series of ideal typical evocative examples to illustrate the kinds of ideologies and practices involved in evaluative decision making for. In this way, it is argued, 'we gain insights into how men 'erect' barriers, how they enact 'biaises' in evaluational contexts (Martin, 1996: 206). It is suggested that the state as a key stakeholder, through its own policies related to higher education, implicitly reinforces these patterns. Women faculty remain concentrated in areas that are least likely to be seen as involving valued knowledges and in these contexts they draw on 'the symbolic resources of femininity' thus complicating the possibility of resistance (Bolton and Munzio, 2007). Finally the paper suggests that an exemplary model of hegemonic

masculinity revolving around science and technology, is being replaced by a managerialist model, although the ideology of male superiority exists.

More specifically then the paper shows that in Ireland, the proportion of women faculty in the Universities has increased dramatically over the past twenty five years, although they remain under-represented at professorial, senior management and governance level-and this pattern is compared with international patterns. A variety of explanations have been put forward for that phenomenon (REFS). These are critically evaluated in the context of the paper's concern with one particular aspect of the organisational culture viz the practices and processes involved in maintaining an historically and situationally specific hegemonic masculinities reflected in Irish state policies and in organisational practices. These patterns are located in the context of a brief description of the structure of Higher Education and the mandates that exist as regards gender in the University Act (1997), the Higher Educational Authority and the State. In addition the paper includes a content analysis of the a number of key recent policy documents related to Higher Education produced by national and international stakeholders (including the OECD(2004); the National Development Plan (2007-2013); the EU Roadmap for Equality (2006); the National Women's Strategy (2007-2016) etc. It is suggested that what emerges is an almost universal failure to recognise the implications of the gendered nature of policies by the higher education structures, and even where such recognition does exist, there are no mechanisms to integrate a gender equality perspective into educational planning.

Drawing particularly on Bolton and Munzio (2007) and Martin (1999) and Morley's (1999) work.

In an attempt to understand the processes and practices involved in reproducing these patterns, the paper presents a series of ideal typical evocative examples to illustrate the kinds of ideologies and practices involved- focussing specifically on behaviour in evaluative decision making for. Thus it differentiates between the overtly male hegemonic in ideology and practices; the apparently neutral but still male hegemonic; the complicit; those who are supportive of challenges to male hegemony but do not prioritise it and those who are feminist or profeminist in ideology and practice.

In addition the paper locates the whole question of exemplary models of

masculinity in the current Irish Higher Education context. Thus it suggests that massive investments by the Irish state in science and technology reflect the influence of an exemplary model of hegemonic masculinity, and that this pre-occupation is not accidental, since 'Western Science and technology are culturally masculinised... The guiding metaphors of scientific research, the impersonality of its discourse, the structures of power and communication in science, the reproduction of its internal culture, all stem from the social position of dominant men in a gendered world' (Connell, 2005:6). It has been suggested that managerialism is coming into an ascendant position in Higher Education in Ireland. In such a context there is potentially greater transparency and even in some cases 'spaces for women to do management and to do it in different ways' (Prichard, 1996). However these potentialities can be frustrated by a stress on a long hours culture and by a failure to fundamentally challenge the 'masculinist culture' involving the differential evaluation of predominantly female and predominantly male areas. Furthermore, despite the stress on targets and strategy implicit in a managerialist approach, there has been no evidence of any attempt to identify targets in the gender area, despite the recommendation to this effect (HEA, 2004). Hence it is suggested that competition within the national Higher Education system from Institutes of Technology where women are more likely to be in senior positions; as well as international competition and enlightened male leadership concerned with meeting such challenges may offer the best possibilities for change in the system.

## **Introduction**

Universities can be seen as involved in 'the creation of knowledges, both in the local sense of organisational and managerial knowledge, and in the broader, more pervasive sense of knowledge in and of society-indeed, of what counts as knowledge' (Hearn, 1999:125). In this paper we look at the challenge of gender in such contexts; focusing first on policies related to Higher Education; then at data on the male/female profile of those at professorial, senior managerial and governance levels and then, within these contexts, looking at the practices and processes involved in maintaining historically and situationally specific hegemonic masculinities.

## **Methodology**

This paper focuses exclusively on the Universities as one part of the Higher Education landscape in Ireland (O'Connor, M., 2007). It locates evocative types and exemplary models that suggest how male dominance is reproduced in the wider context of a range of recent policies related to Higher Education (see O'Connor, P. 2007a); and a statistical analysis of the gender of those at professorial, senior managerial and governance levels within the Irish University system. There were difficulties in accessing the latter two types of data while the most recent published data on those at professorial level is from 2002/03 (O'Connor, M. 2007). Data on those at professorial data was made available by the HEA on personal request, but relates to 2004. A number of sources have been used to compile figures on the gender profile of those in senior management positions and on Governing Authorities (IPA Diary, supplemented by University web sites). An evocative masculinist typology and exemplary models of hegemonic masculinities are identified based largely on twenty five years reflexive participation in Higher Education, over fifteen of these being in the University sector. This data is limited since observations were not systematically recorded over the years, although, for example, each of the practices referred to in the evocative types relates to a specific event. Nevertheless the possibility that this constitutes a highly idiosyncratic perception of the academy cannot be eliminated. However, a focus on reflexivity is part of an epistemological challenge to positivism, albeit one that has been viewed with considerable scepticism by many sociologists. Nevertheless, in the context of a small country (less than 4.2m population), with just seven universities, the kind of approach used here can arguably be seen as an important source of insight and a stimulator of other work. Indeed, similar reflexive accounts have been given by other academic women (for example, Burke et al, 2000; Walker, 1997). It does put demands on the readers trust. I can only echo Sennett's (1998) hope that this deviation from normal methodological practice is seen for what it is: a device that enables ideas and observations to be presented in a delicate situation.

## **Gender and Higher Education- Policy Level**

The Universities and the Irish Higher Educational Authority have mandates as regards gender. Thus the University Act (1997: 11: 12k) includes amongst the functions of a

University 'to promote gender balance and equality of opportunity among students and employees of the University'. It (1997:36: 1b) also requires the chief officer to prepare a university policy on 'equality, including gender equality, in all activities of the University' and to implement such a policy. Amongst the five principal functions of the Higher Educational Authority (HEA, 2007a) is: 'To promote the attainment of equality of opportunity in Higher Education'. The Report of the High Level Group on University Equality Policies recommended that the Universities develop an equality action plan 'which sets out explicit and challenging targets and timetables as well as the names of those responsible for delivery' (HEA, 2004:57). However, it has failed to develop any structure to progress this issue following its closure of the Equality Unit in UCC in 2003.

A large number of policy documents have recently been produced in Ireland relating to Higher Education and such documents have largely effectively ignored gender (O'Connor, P., 2008). Thus, the OECD report (2004:12) having noted that women are more likely than men to attain Higher Education, does not attempt to explore the implications of this. Other reports, at most, simply assert the value of 'male' areas of employment and refer to the need to increase participation by women in science, engineering and technology despite the fact that: 'The Irish educational system is already producing more science and engineering graduates as a proportion of third level graduates than most other countries' and their employment levels as researchers per 1,000 of total employment has been low compared to the OECD average (Building Ireland's Knowledge Economy, 2004: 2.24 and 2.23; see also OECD, 2004).

The National Development Plan 2007-2013, like the EU's Roadmap for Equality (2006b), expresses concern that women are less likely to move up to the most senior level of decision making, and although it recognises the usefulness of the equality proofing processes, the only references to gender in the context of Higher Education involves an initiative encouraging female students to study science and engineering. There is no mechanism for looking at whether the proposed E13.5 billion to be allocated to Higher Education during the lifetime of the National Development Plan will reinforce the hierarchically male dominated character of Irish Universities.

Although the National Women's Strategy 2007-2016 (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2007) is specifically concerned with the integration of 'a

gender equality perspective into all stages of the development and implementation of educational policies, plans, curricula and programmes' and although timescales for this have been identified as regards first and second level (ibid: 42 and 46), there is no reference to those in Higher Education. It may be a coincidence that mainstreaming at the first two levels is potentially relevant to men, whereas mainstreaming in Higher Educational is potentially relevant to women.

Such patterns may not be unrelated to the fact that the executive and administrative arms of the State are male dominated (O'Connor, M. 2007; O'Connor, P. 2008) and are advised by a number of bodies whose boards fall considerably below the 40 per cent gender balance recommended by the state (O'Connor, M. 2007). The boards of Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and Forfas which both exert considerable influence on the Universities through research funding are also male dominated (36 per cent and 23 per cent women respectively). Overall then what emerges is an almost universal failure to recognise and deal with the implications of the gendered nature of policies related to Higher Education.

#### Masculinisation of Universities: Professorial, Management and Governance

The gender profile of professorial, senior management and governance positions in Universities is important because those in these positions are most likely to be involved in the creation and validation of knowledge inside and outside the Universities. Their gender profile is of course also important in providing young people with role models: same-sex role models being important in female students' career orientation, confidence and success (O'Connor, 1999).

In Ireland, as elsewhere, the proportion of women faculty in the Universities has increased over the past twenty five years, although they remain under-represented at professorial and senior management level (Acker and Armenti, 2004; Acker, 1980; Bagilhole, 1993; Bagilhole and White, 2006; Currie et al, 2002; Machado-Taylor et al, 2007; Grummell et al, 2007a & b; Kanter, 1977; Meehan, 1999; O'Connor, 2008, 2001, 1999; Park, 1992). A variety of explanations have been given for this situation. Firstly, it has been suggested that it is related to men and women's differential responsibilities for caring for children and other dependents. However, in Ireland this explanation sits uneasily with the fact that the proportion of women at senior level in Irish Institutes of Technology (ITs) is twice what it is in the Universities (O'Connor, M. 2007).

Furthermore, the unions and Department of Education and Science successfully encouraged applications from women for educational management positions at first level in the 1990s (Lynch, 1994; O'Connor, 1998). Secondly, it has been suggested that these patterns reflect individual choices. The solidity of this argument is implicitly challenged by the fact that, for example boys' academic under performance and the absence of men as teachers from the primary school system are seen as systemic problems. The question then arises as to why women's absence from the higher levels of the University system is not seen in the same light. Thirdly, it has been suggested that women's absence from senior positions in the Universities reflects their lower publications output and/or the greater priority they attach to teaching. However Park (1992:237) found that in the UK, controlling for number of publications and age, men still had a more than three times better chance of being at professorial level. Ruane and Dobson (1990:225) concluded that 'correcting for identifiable human capital and individual differences between male and female academics in Ireland' women were paid significantly less than men. Fifthly, these patterns have been seen as reflecting organisational culture. The Hansard Society (1990:68) concluded that 'the persistence of out-dated attitudes about women's roles and career aspirations constitutes the main barrier stopping women from reaching the top of academic life'. This culture has been described as a homosocial masculinist culture. Indeed Kanter (1977) suggested that where women constituted less than 15 per cent, they could be simply used by the dominant group as 'tokens' to legitimize the system. As such, they are both invisible and extra-visible, and may come to be stereotyped, marginalised or alternatively, so identified with their area that they are not seen as promotable.

In the early 1970s in Ireland, before the Marriage Bar was lifted (O'Connor, 1998) women constituted five per cent of those at professorial level, while they made up only 11 per cent of faculty (HEA, 1987). The proportion of women at professorial level is now 10 per cent (with women constituting 37 per cent of faculty in the Universities: HEA, 2006). The proportion of women at professorial level is higher (at 15 per cent) in the EU25- being twice as high in Finland and Portugal (Smyth, 1996; EU, 2006a). In a six country international study (see Table 1), Ireland had the lowest proportion of women at Professorial and Associate Professorial level. Furthermore, the differential between men and women's chances of promotion to Professorial level in



Ireland was one of the worst in Europe, with Irish men 'being at least five times more likely than women to obtain a full professorship' (EU, 2003).

**TABLE 1: Percentage of female professors/ associate professors**

Country	Full Professor	Associate Professor
Australia	17	25
Ireland**	11	14
New Zealand	14	20
Portugal	22	32
Turkey	27	31
United Kingdom	15	27

\*Including the 7 universities supported by the State (Excluding St Patricks Catholic University, Maynooth; the Colleges of Education; NCAD and RSCI and the Institutes of Technology)

Source: Machado-Taylor et al, 2007

Collinson and Hearn (1996:1) noted that 'Most managers in most organisations are men'. Overall men still hold 85 per cent of the positions at senior management level in Irish Universities. All of those at Rector/President level are men (lowest), as are 88 per cent (joint lowest with Turkey) of those at Dean level. Roughly three quarters of those at Vice Rector/Vice Presidential positions are men. This reflects the presence of non-academic women (three of the six women at this level were non-academics as compared with two of the 17 men). In total then, there are eight times more men than women at Dean level or above in Irish Universities- with a total of only three academic women at or above Pro-Vice Rector/Vice President level in the entire Irish University system.

**Table 2: Percentage of women in senior management**

Country	Rector/VC**	Vice Rector/DVC***	PVC/Pro-Rector****	Dean
Australia	21	26	31	25



Ireland+	0	29	25	12
New Zealand	12++	17	17	17
South Africa	17	20	22	21
Portugal	7	27	16	23
Turkey	5	-	12	12
UK	8	6	21	20

In Irish terms \*\* President; \*\*\* Deputy President;\*\*\*\* Other Vice Presidents

+Including the 7 universities supported by the State (Excluding St Patricks Catholic University, Maynooth; the Colleges of Education; NCAD and RSCI and the Institutes of Technology)

Source: Machado -Taylor et al, 2007 ; ++ Now zero- Neale (2008)

Given the HEA's failure to prioritise gender in its guidelines for Governance (HEA, 2007b) it is perhaps not surprising that in only one of the seven Irish Universities, does the percentage of women on University Governing Authorities reach the state recommended 40 per cent level (average 30 per cent; range from 23 per cent (NUI Galway) to 42 per cent (NUI Maynooth). The failure to even to collect data on this aspect of governance implicitly allows individual Universities who are hostile to this agenda to claim that their own practice is normal, inevitable and acceptable.

### **The Processes and Practices Involved in reproducing these Patterns**

Morley (1999:5) suggests that through accounts of the processes and practices involved in the micropolitics of academia, we see how 'patriarchal power is exercised, rather than simply possessed'. Drawing particularly on Bolton and Munzio's (2007) and Martin's (1999) work, it is possible to suggest some of the processes and practices involved in creating these patterns in a University context. Thus for example, a long hours culture; denigration of disrupted career paths and part-time work has been identified in the Universities (Acker and Armenti, 2004; Grummell et al, 2007b) and can be seen as exemplifying Bolton and Munzio's process of *stratification*. Similarly *segmentation* or the tendency for women to be congregated into a narrow range of 'female' specialisms is also evident, with women faculty being most likely to be in the

humanities, followed by the social sciences, and being least likely to be in engineering and technology (EU, 2006a). In Ireland in a context where full-time students in Higher Education increased by 36 per cent between 1996/97 and 2005/06, with real expenditure per student increasing by less than one per cent (CSO, 2007), there is considerable reliance on supplementary programme related funding. The areas that have been disproportionately targeted for and benefited from such funding have been in science, technology and engineering (predominantly male faculty areas). In this way through 'tactical opportunism' 'elite segments' can 'hold on to their traditional privileges and rewards' (Bolton and Muzio, 2007:49). Finally, Bolton and Munzio (2007) also refer to the process of *sedimentation* where female dominated aspects of a profession draw on the symbolic resources of femininity, reflecting and reinforcing women's participation in these areas. Similarly, in Universities there is a tendency for women to be seen, and often to see themselves, as particularly suited to undergraduate teaching, low profile pastoral and/or service roles- activities which draw on such symbolic resources and which seem likely to be productive as regards their career progression (see O'Connor, 2001 and 1996).

### **Five Fold Evocative Typology of Practices**

Connell's (2005: 82) argues that: 'a gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence and women as an interest group concerned with change. This is a structural fact, independent of whether men as individuals love or hate women or believe in equality or abjection'. Like Collinson and Hearn (1996) he stresses that: 'Through the everyday workings of institutions defended in such terms, the dominance of a particular kind of masculinity is achieved' (Connell, 2005:212-213). Martin (1996:207) highlighted the importance of focusing on 'practice, 'the doings of managements', particularly those 'assessments of others' potential, talents, legitimacy, worthiness, skill and performance that were associated with the decisions they (men) made as managers' (ibid: 189). She suggested that masculinism 'denotes the ideology that naturalises and justifies men's domination over women' (ibid: 188). Using 'evocative examples' Martin (1996) suggested that 'the rules and routine practices' used in managerial evaluations in gendered organisations evaluated men's potential differentially than women's; saw

men as more entitled to hold powerful positions and evaluated women's performances and achievements through a lens that devalued them relative to men's. Drawing on twenty five years experience in Higher Education a series of ideal typical evocative examples are identified to illustrate such ideologies and practices, focussing particularly on behaviour in evaluative decision making fora. The identification of these biases and barriers is not new. However, by presenting them in this way, 'we gain insights into *how* men 'erect' barriers, *how* they 'enact' biases in evaluational contexts' (Martin, 1996:206).

**a) Overtly masculinist in ideology and practice**

Those in this ideal type overtly endorsed male superiority and prioritised areas where male faculty were particularly prevalent. They saw attempts to change such priorities as reflecting unacceptable 'social engineering'. Such views were articulated openly and policies involving any kind of gender equality measures were openly challenged. They demonstrated minimal conformity to gender balance policies (e.g. one woman and ten men on an interview board being seen as balanced). They saw little problem with all male interview boards in what were presented as emergency situations, and when challenged about such Boards, suggested that asking female interviewees if they had any objection to this was appropriate and adequate. They saw any attempt to raise gender issues as undermining meritocracy and were active in discrediting and stereotyping those raising these issues. Firm believers in men's superiority, they could on occasion be verbally abusive to women in decision-making fora. For the most part however they did not see the need to do this in a context where male hegemony was taken for granted.

**b) Apparently neutral but still masculinist in ideology and practices**

Those in this category presented themselves as indifferent or neutral on gender issues. Typically they were very organisationally astute and expert at advancing masculinist ideology and practices without appearing to do so. Thus for example, they extended the roles of (male dominated) search committees to include a short listing function and revised models of promotion or appointment that seemed to benefit women. They favoured vague criteria and loose marking schemas at critical access points (these

have been shown to be unhelpful to women candidates: Bagilhole and White, 2006) and used a variety of strategies to ensure that 'ontological security and a culture of sameness' were prioritised on interview boards (Grummell et al, 2007b). They quietly subverted attempts to ensure real gender balance on such boards and evaluated men's potential and/or performance more positively than women's in decision-making fora.

***c) Complicit in practices underpinning masculinism***

Those in this type were less overtly supportive of masculinist ideologies than those in the previous category. Thus they valued the existence of patriarchal privileges but were less confident about their legitimacy. Hence although they did not typically play an active role in proposing masculinist policies, they equally did not oppose them. They saw higher entry points for faculty in overwhelmingly male areas as 'natural' and inevitable' and saw the allocation of women to low profile 'housekeeping' activities in the same light. They resisted identification of staff/student ratios since this might reveal differences between areas that paralleled their gender profile. Some of those in this ideal type were trying to be 'different kinds of men' (Kahn, 2007)- and were empathic and sensitive in their responsiveness to requests for 'paternalistic aid' from younger men - but they ignored the power dimension underpinning such male privileging. In their practices even where they evaluated women's performance positively, they did not typically recommend their appointment/promotion in decision making fora.

***d) Supportive of challenges to masculinism but not a priority***

Those in this category were supportive of challenges to masculinist ideology and practice, although frequently it was not a priority. Thus in some situations they delivered on the spirit as well as the letter as regards gender balance and discouraged practises that were hostile to women. In other cases, where such decisions affected their own activity or comfort zone, their decisions reflected homosociality by which men 'reproduce themselves in their own image' (Kanter, 1977:48)- with their successors being similar in key attributes (such as gender, gendered management style and even physique). Under pressure from other priorities, they over-used 'compliant' women and under-used women who were reputed to be 'difficult' as a way of meeting gender

obligations (with consequent ambivalence amongst the former as regards a gender agenda). Hence, their actions were sometimes counter-productive. Unwilling to 'think outside the box' they were not interested in gender implications of wider state policies.

***e) Feminist or Profeminist in ideology and practices***

Kahn (2007) used the concept of profeminist men to refer to those who are advocates for feminist concerns and opposed to the marginalisation of women. Those in this type did not endorse ideologies of male superiority and saw gender issues as power related. Frequently uncomfortable with hegemonies of any sort, they overtly supported policies and practices that limited male dominance; supported gender auditing and sought to ensure that women were represented on key committees and that the appropriate gender balance existed in decision making fora.

**Exemplary Models of Masculinity in the Current Irish University Context**

Connell (2005:77) defined hegemonic masculinities as 'the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women'. In attempting to understand the massive investment by the state in limited areas of science and technology it seems useful to explore the influence of exemplary models in a society where hegemonic masculinity still involves the subordination of women, but where the basis for that subordination is being challenged (e.g. by the erosion of beliefs about the 'naturalness' of women's intellectual/educational inferiority). In such a context a focus on scientific, technical, high status disciplines that appear to build on the success of Ireland as a high technology centre is arguably attractive. Indeed, Carney's (2006) respondents explicitly referred to this kind of culture amongst policy makers. A second-emerging-exemplar of hegemonic masculinity is identified (i.e. a managerialist one) reflected in the depiction of Universities as simply another kind of business.

***Scientific/ Technological Hegemonic Masculinity***

The State, SFI and various corporate interests continue to see Ireland's economic growth as driven by developments in science and technology (National Development Plan 2007-2013). This is arguably not accidental: 'Western Science and technology are

culturally masculinised. This is not just a question of personnel.....The guiding metaphors of scientific research, the impersonality of its discourse, the structures of power and communication in science, the reproduction of its internal culture, all stem from the social position of dominant men in a gendered world'(Connell, 2005:6). This approach maximises Irish exposure to external developments and as such is one whose sustainability has been questioned (Sheehan, 2005; Barry, 2005); and is further undermined by the disinterest of high achievers, who are disproportionately girls, in such areas 'as a result of the cultural construction of these fields as masculine' (Power and Richardson, 2005:9; Wajcman, 1991). Barrett (2006) has also argued that it is based on unproven assumptions involving the differential contribution of particular disciplines to economic growth. It has been suggested that Ireland's economic growth rates in the 1994-2000 period (in excess of nine per cent per annum) was achieved 'through a combination of 3.7 per cent annual productivity growth and an employment growth of 5.5 per cent' (Mc Loughlin, 2004). It is by no means obvious how areas such as health and education; financial services; the building industry and the retail industry (all identified as experiencing considerable growth between 1997-2004: Turner and D'Art, 2005) create/reflect a demand for University educated graduates in biosciences, ICT and engineering. Turner and D'Art also noted that scientists still constituted less than four per cent of the professionals in Ireland in 2004 (just as they had done in 1997) and that there was little evidence that these patterns reflected a shortage in their production. Indeed two thirds of Irish employment is in the service sector (CSO, 2006b), and future employment growth is seen as being in traded services of any kind (including humanities: Fitzgerald et al, 2005). Furthermore, even if one accepts that innovation is important for economic development, generic skills such as analytical ability, communication and problem solving are arguably likely to be the best preparation for a volatile jobs market (RIA, 2007). A focus on such skills does require that employers be willing to invest in training employees- something that Irish companies seem particularly unwilling to do since the late 1990s (OECD report, 2004; Brereton et al, 2005).

### ***Managerialist Hegemonic Masculinity***

Hearn (1999) referred to the tension between providing education to a broad range of students (seen as part of a liberal democratic project) and tightening the relationship with business (essentially an economic/business project). Allen (2007) has suggested that corporate interests (particularly in the pharmaceutical and information and communication technology (ICT) sectors) in collaboration with agencies such as SFI are driving a pro-business agenda in Irish Universities. Furthermore, this agenda even excludes 'knowledge of culture (marketing, advertising) social needs (health, education) and organisations (management, business services' (O'Riain, 2007:194). In many ways these processes seem to be similar to those which started in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s, in the context of tightening the relationship between education and the economy and increasingly technocratic pressures on the educational system (Prichard, 1996; Hearn, 1999; Thompson, 2007). Morley (1999) identified an increased stress on financial considerations implicit in the new managerialism. Barrett (2006) has been critical of the replacement of elected Deans and heads of department by appointed managers; of increases in the number of managerial posts and of an increased stress on managerial objectives rather than student demand while Grummell et al (2007a) focused more on a culture involving 'long work hours, strong competitiveness, intense organisational dedication and the ongoing measurement of performance of both students and staff'.

In a managerialist context there is potentially greater transparency and even in some cases 'spaces for women to do management and to do it in different ways' (Prichard, 1996). However these potentialities can be frustrated by a failure to fundamentally challenge a 'masculinist culture' that differentially evaluates areas employing predominantly female and predominantly male faculty. Furthermore, despite the stress on targets implicit in a managerialist approach, there has been no evidence of any attempt to identify targets in the gender area, despite the recommendation to this effect (HEA, 2004). Indeed the movement of resources away from areas of student demand that is part of managerialism is likely to increase the proportion of male faculty (since the high demand areas are those where women faculty are most likely to be found). Finally, a managerialist agenda poses particular challenges to women in a context where difference is evaluated against a male norm so that women by definition,



are not seen as 'good enough', thus increasing the pressures on them (Acker and Armenti, 2004).

### **Summary**

In this paper we have been concerned with looking at the Universities as key sites for the differential validation of particular kinds of knowledge. It has shown that in a University context where the proportion of women faculty, at 37 per cent, is at a 'critical mass' (Kanter, 1977); where female students outnumber male students at undergraduate and post graduate level but professorial, senior management and governance continues to be in men's hands. This is reflected in the fact that only roughly one in ten professors are women; less than one in eight Deans are women; that there are only three academic women in the entire Irish University system at or above Vice Rector/Vice Presidential level.

The ideological privileging of masculinity and its practices was set in a wider policy context that continues to valorise knowledge created largely by men. That such narrowly defined areas as ICT and biosciences are sustainable creators of a knowledge economy and future economic growth has been questioned (Sheehan, 2005; O'Riain, 2007; Mc Loughlin, 2004; Barrett, 2006). The argument that these patterns simply reflect conflicts between paid work and family are challenged by the proportion of women at senior level in the Irish Institutes of Technology.

No attempt has been made to ensure that Universities develop an equality action plan 'which sets out explicit and challenging targets and timetables as well as the names of those responsible for delivery' (HEA, 2004:57). Attempts to do so can be depicted as implying that women cannot meet meritocratic standards. However the Department of Finance (2001) has recognised that affirmative action initiatives (including time specific equality targets) need to be put in place in organisational structures which are currently based on the male as norm. MIT (1999) and the Hansard Society (1990) have both described university cultures as deeply hostile to women. Furthermore, the SFI Stokes scheme legitimates recruitment of (predominantly male) professors through informal networks and appointment without public advertisement, in a context where the holders are extremely likely to become permanent (SFI, 2007).

It is suggested that the kind of knowledge that is most valued by the Universities is that which reflects and reinforces masculinism. Scientific/technological hegemonic masculinity is privileged- preferably one that is linked to the commercialisation of research in ICT or biosciences. A second kind of hegemonic masculinity is emerging linked to a managerialist agenda. Current policies, processes and practices ensure that women remain at effectively tokenistic levels in professorial, senior managerial and governance in Irish Universities. The ideology of male superiority and the practices involved in perpetuating male control and reproducing a particular definition of valued knowledge appears to be highly effective. It is suggested that challenges stemming from national and international competition within Higher Education as well as enlightened leadership by men and women concerned with meeting such challenges may offer the best possibilities for change in the system.

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