Gender mainstreaming in Spain: “The case of “Lidera Project” in Madrid Autonomous Community”

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Track: 11. Gender equality and diversity in management General Track

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Access to this paper is restricted to registered delegates of the EURAM 2011 (European Academy of Management) Conference.

Acknowledgements:
IRCO-Research center IESE Business School Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid
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Key words: Gender Mainstreaming, Autonomous Community of Madrid, Glass ceiling

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Women continue to be under-represented in senior positions in many fields despite the fact that they make up nearly half of the workforce and more than half of new university graduates in the European Union. Only one out of 10 board members of the largest companies listed on the national stock exchange of EU Member States is a woman and progress has been slow in recent years. The disparity is widest at the very top where only 3% of such companies have a woman directing the highest decision-making body (Iversen and Frances, 2010). If Europe is to achieve its goal of becoming a dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in a globalised world, the European institutions and social agents have the challenge to make better use of women’s talents and skills. The problem at the moment is that the few senior women in management positions are perceived as outsiders and this fact creates a false (male) stereotype of what it is to be a leader. Male leaders tend to be associated with "agentic" behavior: they are more likely to be proactive, assertive, and dominant, in control of the situation. However female leaders, by contrast, show what we call "communal values": friendliness, support, warmth and a caring attitude (Chandler, 2010). There is an increasing body of research showing that gender diversity pays off and that there is a positive correlation between women in leadership and business performance (Dunphy, 2004). Decision-makers also appear to have limited awareness of the current and increasing demographic changes of
the workforce that strongly affect human resources. Further, many decision-makers appear to be unaware of the potential benefits of diversity or the negative outcomes of discrimination at work that can affect every aspect of management and organizational functioning.

**Theoretical background**

No question, the female population of Spain has had a lot of catching up to do. The four decades of authoritarian dictatorship following Spain's civil war kept women in traditional roles far longer than other Europeans, and they trailed far behind women in the U.S. and Britain who gained substantial ground during World War II when they filled in for men away at battle. Even now, less than 3% of top management in Spain's public companies is female.

Yet in recent years, Spanish women have made substantial progress in business, politics, and the judiciary. Now, with new laws on the way designed to increase their power in business, they may be on the verge of breaking the glass ceiling at last. Currently public agents are developing new strategies in order to avoid this fact. A critical case of this process is, which True and Mintrom (2001:28 ) defined gender mainstreaming as the efforts to scrutinize and reinvent processes of policy formulation and implementation across all issue areas to address and rectify persistent and emerging disparities between men and women. That is a “new” and more promising, transformative, even “revolutionary” strategy (see also: Hafner-Burton & Pollack 2000: 3; Rees 1998; Rees 2000).

This is the way to make gender equality a concrete reality in the lives of women and men creating space for everyone within the organizations as well as in communities - to contribute to the process of articulating a shared vision of sustainable human development and translating it into reality (McInerney et al., 2010). Gender mainstreaming was originally launched in 1996 to promote gender equality in all EU policies, in the context of an international and European mobilization around women’s equality. It aimed to transform
mainstream policies by introducing a gender-equality perspective in European policy-making. Gender mainstreaming as a strategy is meant to actively counteract this gender bias, and to use the normal mandate of policy makers to promote more equitable relations between women and men (Verloo, 2000: 13). It addresses “systems and structures themselves – those much institutionalized practices that cause both individual and group disadvantage in the first place” (Rees 2000: 3), he considers ‘mainstreaming equality’ one of the three major tools of sex equality policies, together with equal treatment legislation and positive action in favour of women (Kelan and Jones, 2010). Gender mainstreaming does not rely on law enforcement mechanisms but involves long-term transformation of public policies (Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000; Liebert 2003). By emphasizing the danger of weakening gender equality policies altogether - a result of gender mainstreaming implementation - Verloo (2001) argues that given gender power relations, gender mainstreaming becomes a political process in itself.

The adoption of gender mainstreaming implied that it was no longer acceptable to assume that additional resources targeted at stimulating economic development and growth benefited men and women equally. Therefore, in order to maximize the economic impact of policies designed to stimulate regional development they need to be more ‘gender aware.’ This is what gender mainstreaming is attempting to achieve by bringing gender equality considerations to the mainstream policy development and delivery process. The rationale for pursuing gender mainstreaming via the Structural Funds is as much about promoting economic efficiency as it is about promoting equity.

**Lidera Project**

The Autonomous Community of Madrid is one of the 17 regions into which Spain is divided constitutionally with the advent of democracy in 1977. The Community of Madrid has more than six million people and includes the capital, Madrid many industrial townships and living
bedroom areas. For fifty years, Madrid has become a government administrative center in financial, industrial and service sectors. The Government of this community has been governed for nearly 20 years by the Popular Party, a center-right party, which now is in opposition at the national level. For two terms the President is Mrs. Esperanza Aguirre, one of the few and the first female politician in Spain to have held the office of President of the Senate and Minister of Education and Culture in Spanish democratic history. The Government of the Region of Madrid, Mrs. Esperanza Aguirre and her team has launched three years ago, the “Lidera project”1. The Madrid Community launches the Program led to enhance women's leadership. The main objectives pursued by this initiative are to enhance women’s professional opportunities and facilitate their access to leadership positions in companies. Lidera is an ambitious program of guidance, training and careers advice, designed for all women of the Community of Madrid interested in developing their leadership skills.

*Lidera* consists of two initiatives:

- **Lidera Scholarships**: Scholarships for graduate study programs in the most prestigious business schools.

- **Lidera Skills**: Training program in leadership skills that are developed in three phases, seminars, workshops and individual coaching, always with the support of trainers and women first-rate professional references.

All participants in the program are part of the leading network, which strengthens the central role of women and enhances their personal and professional development through various services.

In this paper we focus our study in the impact of the initiative Lidera Scholarships. The process is done with the collaboration of the most prestigious business schools established in

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1 Program funded by the European Social Fund
their territory. The media is giving scholarships covering 70% of the amount of fees to qualified professionals who pass the selection process of the institutions in postgraduate courses, master and business education training. We can find the empirical support of this initiative in a current study conducted by Slater and Dixon-Fowler (2010), the author’s affirm": “CEOs with MBAs are making a positive contribution to the environmental sustainability of the planet.”

In this sense, “Lidera Project” is based on the belief that business school education is higher than the fastest path to equality of opportunity and breaks the glass ceiling famous female gender. Once completed this training period they are more likely to be promoted to the top levels of the companies’ organization or to move to other areas.

**Research Objective**

Gender mainstreaming demands an investigation of gendered societal processes and outcomes, as embodied in policy implementation and results. After a few years of Lidera project implementation is the time to analyze its impact and effectiveness. In this paper we highlight the role of individual key players, politicians and civil servants in specific political and administrative decisions.

As the purpose of mainstreaming is to alter the existing social and political order that leads to gendered outcomes, the first research objective is to analyze the impact of Lidera project, that is to explore the changes in domestic norms and institutions arising from the gender mainstreaming efforts of the Lidera project or in other words to assess the overall effectiveness of the gender mainstreaming effort through the Lidera project. More specifically we would like to investigate the link between appropriate educational training and advancement along corporate ladders of major global businesses (Devon and Grayson, 2005). Consequently the second research
objective of the paper consists in investigate the link between better education training provided through the Lidera project and the advancement of women in corporate settings in Spain.

Methodology

We analyze the case of “Lidera Project” developed by Madrid Autonomous Community in Spain. The project promoted by a Madrid public government in collaboration with the main business schools operating in this geographical area provide valuable insights into gender mainstream public policy. Madrid community, with this project, is seeking to promote women integration in the labor market and to improve the role of women in top positions of responsibility. In the framework of local plans of equal opportunities between women and men, promoted by European Union, Madrid government is giving grants to Madrid women’s to study in the most prestigious postgraduate business schools. The principal aim of this call is to promote the labor market women integration and to enhance their position in the organization hierarchy by overcoming the obstacles of discrimination and segregation for gender reasons.

We are going to evaluate the efficiency of Lidera Project, both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methodologies, that is, a mixed methods approach. We are going to use quantitative data to specify how well the program goals were met (Sleezer and Spector, 2006) and used qualitative methods to investigate the big picture in the sense of the impacts the stakeholders of the project. Combining both methods can often improve the interpretation of the results and be more meaningful to decision makers. Quantitatively speaking we want to compile the main figures of the project: Percentage of EU funds that the Community of Madrid intended to “Lidera Project” and in particular within the project to scholarships”; budget, requirements, descriptive characteristics of the final beneficiaries, period of
application, and total cost of the project. Qualitatively speaking we are going to conduct semi-structured interviews with three groups of different people:

- The women’s who has been received the grant,
- The president of Madrid Community an officials responsible for the project
- The program directors and professors of the business schools involved in the project

The fact of combining both methods can often improve the interpretation of the results and be more meaningful to decision makers (in this case public agents).

*The sample*

In a first stage of the project we will intend to give an initial response to the research objectives using data from the woodcock “Lidera project” who have participated in management programs at IESE Business School.

The total beneficiaries of the scholarship “Lidera” that have participated in programs at IESE adding the 5 calls are 218 woman’s, that constitute a total amount of 3.729.480 €.

We are currently involved in a stage of fieldwork. We developed a questionnaire that we are running at this time.

At the same time we are conducting the interviews that we mention above.

*Findings expected*

As democratic theorists have long observed, quality education is a vital component of citizenship, reducing the barriers to individuals' participating in public discussion, deliberation, and debate over matters of public policy. The postgraduate qualification is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for senior posts (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000) and for many women, as a way of breaking through the glass ceiling (Burke, 1994; Leeming & Baruch,
Business schools are a central agency of secondary socialization of business people. For this reason, we can expect that the greater the likelihood that women will have places in the top positions of public and private organizations with an improvement in the quality of leadership over time. Linking to the objectives above, we expect the findings to shed some light on objectives 1 and 2, starting with objective 2, and moving from there to show how the advancement of women reflects on the overall effectiveness of the gender mainstreaming effort through the Lidera project.

Moreover, as an extension of objective 1 we look forward to identify what are the key success factors of gender mainstream initiatives such as the “project Lidera” and discover their potential application to other territories and to explore what are the key factors for success, as well as target areas for improvement. We also hope the results of the project in terms of how many participants are taking currently responsibility positions in the companies in Madrid as the result of the training received through the project. Finally we hope to determine whether actions taken are enough and/or what other mainstream gender initiatives are needed to achieve the objectives of the program and what are the factors that determine that.

The main limitation of the paper is that we are going to do the analysis not with all the people who had been granted but only with the IESE participants. We are conscious of the bias that this limitation suppose and the necessity to obtain the data of the other business schools which are involves in the project.

References


