

Women excluded from top academic positions in our universities, says IFUT

400 international delegates to debate equality for women in education at Dublin Conference

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The number of women progressing through the career structure in universities is unacceptable y low and is effectively resulting in gender segregation in the academic labour force with women filing less than one in five of Professor grades, Joan Donegan, Deputy General Secretary of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) says.

She was speaking in advance of a major international conference in Dublin next week: 'Women in Trade Unions and in Education: From Words to Actions - On the Move for Equality' (Apr. 7 - 9), organised by Educational International, which will be attended by 400 international delegates

The conference will be opened by Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn, TD.

Joan Donegan said statistics from the HEA for our seven universities show that in 2013 women comprised:

- 19% of Professor grades
- 26% at Associate Professor level.

"This indicates persistent gender segregation in the academic labour force in Ireland," Joan Donegan says.

The issue has been under review at a number of universities, including UCC, which recently completed the *Through the Glass Ceiling* project, involving 219 female academics and researchers in the college, from postdoctoral to professorial level between 2010 and 2012

It recommended incorporation of an 'equality framework' and robust and practical equality structures in universities, as well as dedicated personnel and mentoring to tackle inequality.

UCC is also part of the EU wide GENOVATE project which seeks to ensure equal opportunities for women and men by encouraging a more gender-competent management in research, innovation and scientific decision-making bodies. Other initiatives are taking place in both UL and TCD

These initiatives are welcome. As a next step, however, Irish Universities need to focus collectively on the themes that are common to all of the equality projects, Joan Donegan believes.

“If women are not fairly represented and equally considered for leadership positions, then half of the population are being effectively excluded from decision-making forums and the quality of appointments may be compromised.

“Even from a purely practical point of view, as highlighted by the EU Expert Group on Structural Change (2012), we can no longer afford to underutilize female talent in times of skills shortages.

“The development of family-friendly policies that honour professional excellence and opportunity, for both men and women, is the key to the wide improvement in the lives of professional academics. Equality must also value different styles, behaviours and aspirations. Women do bring additional set of talents to the workplace,” she said.

ENDS

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Editors Note: Education International is the world’s largest federation of unions, representing 30 million education employees in 400 organisations in 170 countries and territories across the globe. Education International unites all teachers and education employees. Its key policies include:

- the principle that quality education, funded publicly, should be available to every student in every country.
- promoting and representing the interests of teachers and other education employees on the international level.
- assisting the development of independent democratic organisations to represent teachers and other education employees and builds solidarity and cooperation.
- advocating for equity in society and combating racism and xenophobia. It challenges discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and racial or ethnic origin or characteristics.