



women's **voices**
women **and** work
scotland 2016

Challenges experienced by women
working in teaching and other academic
roles in the education sector

stuc



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Introduction

The education sector is another interesting sector in which to explore gender specific work and employment issues. Teachers and lecturers play an important role in society – they educate, nurture and shape the thinking of the future workforce, citizens, parents and members of communities. Worryingly, the perception of what used to be considered as a secure and fulfilling career choice has now started to deteriorate as a consequence of pay erosion and increased workload. This short paper includes themed summaries of the most concerning problems for women working in teaching and lecturing roles in the Scottish education sector, as identified by two of the sector’s trade unions organising in the primary, secondary and further education (Educational Institute of Scotland, EIS¹), and further and higher education (University & College Union, UCU). Themed summaries from each sector will be outlined first, and overlapping concerns and priorities for union work will be pulled out in the concluding remarks.

Situation of Female Teachers Working in Primary and Secondary Schools

The most worrying problems in relation to women’s work and careers within the primary and secondary education context are outlined below.

Glass ceiling and gender segregation

Historically, women have always dominated the primary school sector. Research informs that currently 91% of teachers in the primary sector are female².

Interestingly, EIS indicated that there has always been a gender imbalance in relation to the distribution of promoted posts (i.e. Head Teachers, Depute Head Teachers and Principal Teachers). Relative to the number of male teachers working in the primary sector, the number of men occupying the promoted posts is high. In 2014, male teacher representation

¹ EIS is the largest teaching union in Scotland with 55,000 members. EIS negotiates on matters of pay and conditions of service on behalf of lecturers/teachers with local authority and government representatives within the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT).

² Scottish Government, Teacher Census. Supplementary data for 2014.

in primary schools stood at 9%, yet 13% of men were occupying positions as Head Teachers and 12% Depute Head Teachers. The secondary school sector until recently has been dominated by male teachers. Although this imbalance has shifted, with female teachers now in the majority, the number of promoted posts occupied by men is also higher in secondary schools: 63% of secondary teachers are female, but only 39% are employed as Head Teachers. The project learned this picture is shared across all thirty-two local authorities in Scotland, with fewer than 12 women in posts as Head of Education at local authority level.

When reflecting on female teachers' career progression, this is indeed a worrying trend, particularly when teaching is now considered a female-dominated profession. This data suggests the career progression system in the education sector is faulty. Experts worry that if women still experience glass ceilings in female-friendly sectors like teaching, then the expectation for women reaching the highest positions in more male-dominated environments is perhaps over optimistic.

EIS has recently done some work around gender stereotyping which showed a clear clustering in terms of subject choice among secondary school pupils. The same idea of clustering plays out within the subject departments in secondary schools. For example, in an English Department of a particular secondary school, from amongst twelve members of staff only two was male, as it appears to be "touchy, feely, romantic, poetic" etc, as a subject and presented as better suited for female teachers. In contrast, in the Technology Department every single member of staff was male. Subject choices taught by female and male teachers in 2014³ aligns with typical clusters of occupational segregation observed across female and male-dominated economic sectors.

For example, English, Languages, History, Biology, Chemistry, Religious Education, Business Studies, Art and Home Economics were overwhelmingly overrepresented by female teachers, whereas Physical Education, Physics, Computing Studies, Technical Education and Economics were subjects taught mainly by male teachers.

EIS is aware of the fact that these gender stereotypes underpinning subject choice not only narrow learning opportunities for girls and women in the short term, but have a significant

³ Scottish Government, Teacher Census. Supplementary data for 2015.

impact on their life-long career patterns and earnings. Discussion around gender balance instantly makes the wider public think about increasing the representation of women in any given professional context. However, this issue is problematic for women and men alike, because they are confined to particular gender expectations, which may not necessarily fit with their personalities and real career desires. They might chose career paths which bring financial rewards or conform to the overall societal expectations, but their life-long happiness, satisfaction and wellbeing might be substantially affected.

The primary teaching sector is overwhelming represented by female teachers, and the EIS would like to see it being more gender balanced. Much research suggests that interactions with a gender diverse education workforce is good for children and their learning. The union believes that a greater gender balance within the primary sector would also positively impact on female teachers, due to an increased societal valuation of a gender balanced teaching workforce. Overall labour market trends suggest that male-dominance in any given sector of the economy brings about higher wages. Thus perhaps, if the same strategic principle is applied to the education sector and more men are attracted to take up teaching as a long-term attractive career choice, female teachers could benefit from such gender balancing reform (providing efforts continue to be taken to protect against differential pay gaps and specific efforts are made to avoid an even greater glass ceiling phenomenon potentially arising from an influx of male teachers). However, until that strategic re-designing of the sector's workforce takes place, EIS believes women will remain disadvantaged.

Erosion of a teacher status

In the meantime, the voice of the teaching profession is concerned with the erosion of the status of teaching. One of the senior officers at EIS, said:

“I think what has happened over time is that there has been an erosion of the status of teachers. At one point in time they have been considered as an important part of the community - and as public sector workers - relatively well-paid. That status has started to erode as well as the financial rewards of the job and, therefore, teaching has become a less attractive profession of choice.”

Socio-cultural factors were noted as contributors to imbalances in the status and economic power of female teachers. Societal expectations of women in relation to their caring roles, creates the canvas for the weaker status of women in the workplace context, and a reduced chance for career progression and better remuneration. Promoted posts carry greater authority, recognition and higher remuneration. However, as mentioned in the previous section, proportionately fewer women enjoy the reputational and economic benefits of working in educational management and leadership roles.

Women's earnings, in particular the decreasing value of wages and pensions, is one of the signs of the eroded professional status of female teachers. EIS admitted this problem is not always explicitly discussed as gendered in character. Yet a derisory pay offer has a disproportionately high impact on women's lifelong earnings, both in work and in retirement. A deterioration in teachers' pensions is a particularly worrying issue for the EIS. Due to pension reform and the raising of the retirement age, teachers who are affected by these changes feel frustration and resent that they now pay much more in pension contributions, for longer, but receive less retirement income when their careers end.

In light of this, as promoted posts offer women opportunities for higher wages in the short-term, and better pensions in the long-term, more female employment at promoted levels would be advantageous for female teachers, yet the project learned that these opportunities are less commonly accessed by female teachers. At the same time, a shortage of teachers and head teachers has been recently noted. In certain areas of Scotland in particular, it is difficult to recruit head teachers.

Results of an investigation in this matter conducted by the Association of Directors of Education are expected this year. The EIS would like to have seen an equality impact study conducted as part of this work, the results of which might help to explain why there is a shortage of head teachers in Scotland.

The union believes that this would have provided an opportunity for increasing understanding around specific barriers encountered by women (and ethnic minorities groups) in accessing promoted posts.

Fifteen years ago, within the first term of the Scottish Parliament, the EIS negotiated the most important and influential framework agreement for the teaching profession. The McCrone Agreement (A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century) increased teachers' wages, clarified and reinforced the professional status of teachers and allowed for a degree of autonomy in terms of where teachers do their work when not delivering class contact to pupils, or involved in other school-based collegiate activities. It put in place a clearer delineation of what teachers should and should not be doing and endeavoured to control teachers' workloads by restricting the contractual working week to 35 hours. Given the demography of the teaching workforce, the agreement negotiated in 2001 brought disproportionately high benefits for women. Sadly, in the years following implementation of the agreement, pay has eroded and workload increased, and frustration at the latter has manifested itself in disappointed and stressed secondary teachers being balloted on industrial action as a consequence of workload increases specifically linked to the delivery of new qualifications.

Teachers' health and wellbeing

Teaching is a very intense frontline service. It is a demanding profession, but the expectation is that teachers, (and as we established, predominantly women), will work until they are 67 years of age. Data from 2014 shows 28% of females working in the primary sector were already 46 years old and over, and this ratio was even higher in the secondary setting (31.25%). This extension of expectations for older teachers brings up a variety of issues which the EIS argues needs further consideration.

The most immediate worry points towards a correlated effect between an extended obligation to work in a demanding classroom environment with a heavy workload, and impacts on the health and wellbeing of many women at the end of their teaching careers.

Last year, the EIS conducted a survey on the health and wellbeing of teachers. The results confirmed that teaching is a stressful job. The level of stress experienced by EIS members was associated with heavy workloads. A separate survey confirmed that, although teachers are contracted to work 35 hours a week, they regularly work more than 48 ½ hours.

The EIS believes this hefty workload has a negative impact on all teachers and has particular implications for women, as they are disproportionately responsible for caring. The particular nature of the experience of many females involves balancing work and home responsibilities, leading to concerns arising around wellbeing and mental-health for this group. This dual role women carry has important implications also with regards to their career progression. Ongoing concerns about workload influence female judgement on whether they can and are able to take on additional work responsibilities or promotion. Either by nature or by social conditioning, women tend to put themselves secondary in terms of the needs of their families, friends, students and others. Many talented women, the EIS suggests, are often too busy with coping with workload and the demands of everyday home-life to even consider that an upcoming career development opportunity could be an option for them.

This is one of the reasons why EIS takes seriously its commitment to reducing teachers' workloads. The union welcomed that the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) have acknowledged in recent pay negotiations that teacher workload is a serious concern. The union is also pleased to see that the recommendations of the dedicated Working Group set up to tackle unnecessary bureaucracy in schools remain on the agenda.

Training opportunities and career advancement

Opportunities for training and progression for women teachers have also been identified as an area of growing concern. Due to the strained budgets of local authorities, opportunities for training have become more limited.

For women, in particular, the challenge of taking advantage of continuous learning is again related to their responsibilities as primary carers. EIS reports that, in the past, training opportunities were integrated within the school day schedule and teachers were released from school to attend these sessions.

Increasingly, continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities tend to be organised after school (evening/twilight sessions) or at weekends. Such change is a potential barrier for many women who have children and require childcare support. That said, however,

attendance at weekend and CPD events organised by the EIS are well attended by female members.

In addition, the career structure within the education sector has changed in recent years. Previously much clearer hierarchical career structures were in place, with more opportunities for progression to middle layer management. Over time this has been replaced with a rather fractured system due to the disappearance of some posts, such as principal teachers. In practice, this means that an average-sized secondary school may have lost about 10 middle management positions by opting for a structure with no principal teachers and a reduced number of faculty heads⁴.

Flexible working

One of the working practices most discussed in recent years has been flexible working. These arrangements are especially helpful for working women who want to keep working but in a reduced capacity. EIS informed this project that in the school context up until recently women in many local authorities could apply for flexible working arrangements and that renegotiations of these conditions would have been continued on an individual and year to year basis.

While individual schools tried to be as accommodating as possible, around five years ago local authorities forced women into making decisions whether or not they wanted to permanently work on reduced hours (part-time employment) or give up their flexible working arrangements. Staff are no longer allowed to negotiate arrangements that would suit their particular circumstances at any given point in time. This is a very regressive move that has negatively impacted on many women.

⁴ The following structure was previously in place within the secondary school sector: teacher, assistant principal teacher of every subject, principal teachers of every subject, deputy head teacher and head teacher. Currently the career path is different: principal teachers in most local authorities have disappeared almost entirely having been replaced with head of faculties, substantially decreasing the opportunities for career advancement. For example, in the past 20-28 posts of principal teachers would be fill in by average school, which were replaced by 8-10 faculty head positions.

Commonly, teachers with young child/children prefer to continue working on flexible arrangements up until that child/children go to school. Only then are these parent-teachers in a position to return to work full-time. Because the local authorities prevented these annual negotiations, many women were forced into making decisions to move into permanent part-time arrangements, which disadvantage them in the short, medium and long-term. That again should be understood in terms of women's pay, career prospects and pensions. Women who are working on flexible arrangements will become under-employed when their children go to school, when they can and want to do full-time work with a full-time income. So far, very little progress has been made to change these unfavourable arrangements. There is an urgent need for the Scottish education system to better understand and accommodate the needs of the workforce which provides crucial services to children and young people.

Childcare

As with women working in other sectors, affordability and flexibility of childcare is also an issue for teachers. EIS confirmed that female teachers have to arrange their childcare like everybody else and they have to pay the same exorbitant costs for childminders, private nurseries and other care services, as any other female worker. EIS acknowledges that the cost of childcare in Scotland is a primary reason for so many teachers, particularly in non-promoted posts, deciding to cut the number of hours they work. Such decisions help their family budgets in the short term and, therefore, for many women it is a necessity rather than a choice. A lot of teachers also use parents and grandparents to help with childcare, to manage costs.

The project also learned that inflexible childcare arrangements can impact on the stress levels of female teachers. Teachers do not always live in the community in which they teach. Many choose nurseries that are more local to their community, rather than to their workplace. Only a minority of teachers, in schools with attached nurseries, chose to place their children there. For those teachers who have to travel a long distance between childcare settings and their schools, additional pressures appear. EIS commented on the impacts of those journeys on the daily working lives of women members:

“Often women come to work very stressed, because they had a difficult morning, maybe a child has been ill, or there has been an issue about leaving a child in the nursery/school, or a problem with the commute. Because of that, it can be difficult for them to get to work on time, with the school day beginning at a fixed time. They also don’t have the same flexibility at the end of working day as other teachers who don’t have those childcare demands. They have to leave at a certain time, in order to pick the child from a provision, because it will close at a certain time, or maybe they have only paid for a fixed amount of hours.”

The current inflexibility of childcare provision has repercussions on the wellbeing of female teachers. Often, they have to take home the workload they did not manage to complete at school. Although the nature of teachers’ contracts is flexible and enables them to have autonomy over the time and place of their work (as long as they are not required in the classroom with children, or to work collaboratively with colleagues or other partners), the stress of managing to balance workload with all professional and personal responsibilities has been noted by the EIS as becoming increasingly difficult and challenging.

Focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers

The EIS and the education sector in Scotland are supportive of women being encouraged towards whichever role they want to take up professionally, including careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The sector also understands that STEM careers are being targeted, because it is a good employment context which can enhance women’s status and salaries. However, EIS believes that the STEM focus in isolation has a limited chance of making a most profound change for women in general.

The undervaluation of occupations and skills is widespread in Scottish society and the economy, particularly occupations and roles currently dominated by women, e.g. care workers, nursing professions, customer service roles, retail workers, artists, and teaching assistants.

The EIS worries there is a danger that ,while the Government promotes the STEM careers by alleviating barriers (which so far have been preventing women from embarking on careers

in these sectors), conditions of employment and job security in other sectors might further deteriorate. At the moment, many professional groups outwith the focus of STEM, feel that the Government's attention and policy-making efforts are disproportionately one-sided.

Situation of women working in Further and Higher Education

The problems causing most problems in relation to women's work and careers in the higher education context are outlined below.

Universities as a work setting

Regardless of the teaching discipline or an area of expertise, research into the position of women working in Further and Higher Education showed a great degree of casualisation and precariousness. Intrigued by the findings of TUC published research⁵, which documented individual cases of women working in the F&HE sector, the project's further conversation with an officer from the University & College Union in Scotland confirmed insecure employment positions for many teaching and research staff working in Scotland. While the personal circumstances of any woman working in Further and Higher Education might differ, the overall patterns of work and career, as well as conditions of insecure employment, clearly emerged as damaging the confidence of this highly educated and trained workforce.

Universities of today have become competitive enterprises with an international presence. They are, therefore, run like for-profit businesses, often utilising cost-effective strategies which are being applied also to employment practices.

The university frontline teaching staff are increasingly employed on a variety of long-term, short-term/fixed-term, full-time/part-time and ad hoc/seasonal/casual employment contracts (hourly-paid, bank, zero-hours contracts). Often people with similar qualifications and experience, and who do comparable jobs, are employed on very different types of contracts and with different levels of security.

⁵ Original case studies used to build up description can be found in TUC publication "Women and Casualization" p. 33-39.

Casual employment

UCU reports that the use of casual contracts in the sector is very wide. The prevalence of casualisation in the university context thus applies across a wide range of departments and skillsets, and this includes skilled professionals with the highest earned degrees.

The following list gives an indication of common contractual arrangements of the university workforce who are employed in teaching and research capacity.

Case 1: A member of staff works within a department for many years (often 10 or 15 years) on a variety of fixed term contracts. Shortly before a new semester starts that person is being told s/he is not required for work in the new semester.

Case 2: Researchers tend to work in project conditions that are dependent on external funding. Even people working on an open-ended contract are still subjected to a possible scenario of funding discontinuity. Sometimes they are being told at the last minute (e.g. at the end of the month) that funding has been discontinued/or no funding extension has been granted and, therefore, they do not have any more work.

Case 3: Many teaching/research work on a series of fixed-term contracts over the years (one after the other for a few years). It is common and regarded as acceptable that contracts, if renewed, are always renewed last minute.

Case 4: Postgraduate students carrying out their doctoral research are often expected to deliver some hours of teaching and provide additional support activities. Sometimes they are employed on casual contracts and sometimes they are expected to work for free, as such experience is explained as beneficial for their careers.

Case 5: Underemployed members of staff on casual contracts try to take up work in different workplaces to top up their wages. However, balancing the requirements and timetables of many departments (and often institutions based in different locations) causes stress and anxiety.

Case 6: Whilst some universities are prepared to spend a lot of money to pay for high profile professors, who arrive with spouses/partners (and whose contracts often includes

work at a university for a partner as a part of a relocation policy), some of the casual staff members will never see a permanent job contract.

Casualisation of employment is exploitative in nature and it is also known for its demoralising effect on individuals. Pressure arising from uncertainty of employment is immense, and the inability to plan one's working future yields a great degree of stress.

In addition, UCU explained that the prolific last minute confirmation of contract extensions often occur because universities are not able to recruit full-time academic staff of a certain calibre, status and reputation. This, in itself, could be seen as a disrespectful attitude towards the university's casual workforce. It seems working practices employed by universities display features of a laissez-faire culture, but this culture has a massive impact on workers' health and wellbeing.⁶

There is a wealth of academic and non-academic studies which critically investigate the problem of casualisation in higher education.⁷

UCU has also carried out its own research on the prevalence and impact of casualisation on the university teaching workforce, and found that 68% of research staff in higher education are on fixed term contracts, with many more dependent on short-term funding for continued employment. The UCU report⁸ shows that more than 42% of staff on casual contracts, such as controversial zero-hours contracts, in universities and colleges, have struggled to pay household bills, and over a third (35%) reported that they struggled to meet rent or mortgage demands. An alarming one in five (21%) said that they struggled to put food on the table. This is because two-fifths of staff on casual contracts in universities

⁶ UCU has collected a significant number of cases involving workplace stress and thinks the higher education sector fails to deal with the problem very well. UCU Health and Safety Officers report organisations are neither committed to doing stress audits nor allowing for reasonable adjustments.

⁷ For example, Haiven, M. (2014). *The Ivory Cage and the Ghosts of Academe: Labor and Struggle in the Edu-Factory*. Truthout, 30 April. Butler, S. (2013). "Universities twice as likely to use zero-hour contracts than other employers". *The Guardian*. 5 September. Slaughter, S.; and Rhoades, G. (2000). *The Neo-Liberal University*. New Labor Forum, 6, 73-79. Smith, E.; Colin Bryson, Nikki Barnes (2000), *The casualisation of employment in higher education in the United Kingdom*, in Malcolm Tight (ed.) *Academic Work and Life: What it is to be an Academic, and How this is Changing* (International Perspectives on Higher Education Research, Volume 1) Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.187 – 241.

⁸ University and College Union 2015. *Making ends meet: The human cost of casualization in post-secondary education*.

(41%) work 30 hours or less a week and nearly a third (30%) earn less than £1,000 a month⁹. It is important to add that the number of hours worked each month is highly variable.

Staff on casual contracts tended to be from ages of 26 and 40 (50%) in higher education, and between ages of 45 and 60 (50%) in further education. 41% of casual staff in higher education and 50% of staff in further education declared difficulties in accessing holiday pay, sick pay (44%/42%), maternity pay (16.5%/5%), Jobseeker's Allowance (30%/29%) and Working Tax Credit (22%/29%).

Casualisation and the use of zero-hours contracts have been reported by EIS and UCU as an ongoing and increasingly problematic issue in both HE and FE. Trade union research argues that women overwhelmingly tend to be on casual contracts in the university context¹⁰. Research confirms that a lack of job permanency has implications on career prospects of women in terms of opportunities for further training and development (often offered to full-time staff only) as well as promotions. It also shows that casualised contracts impact on individual finances short-term (e.g. ability to secure mortgage, pay bills and food) and long-term (e.g. pensions) and their ability to manage daily life and responsibilities.

Similarly to other sectors, single mothers in particular might find themselves in the most vulnerable position, because of being paid for work on an hourly basis, and perhaps not being offered a sufficient amount of work.

UCU sees the need for an urgent change in university culture. The union has declared a commitment to the elimination of zero-hours contracts, especially as a priority for the work the union does with its female membership. UCU set up a dedicated Anti-Casualisation Committee (in existence since 2008) to monitor the problem and campaign for the removal of casualised contracts. In the last couple of years, UCU in Scotland has worked hard to reduce zero-hours contracts. Edinburgh-based universities were amongst the most prolific

⁹ Statistics are even worse for people working in further education. University and College Union 2015. Making ends meet: The human cost of casualization in post-secondary education.

¹⁰ TUC 2015 "Women and Casualisation: Women's experiences of job insecurity". TUC: London. EIS 2014, The Use of Zero-Hours Contracts (Policy Paper). EIS-FELA 2014 Report on the FoI Requests on Zero Hours Contracts issued to FE Colleges in Scotland in August 2013. University and College Union 2015. Making ends meet: The human cost of casualization in post-secondary education.

users of this type of contract. Capital-based institutions made a declaration to review the individual person's contractual status within every department, in order to identify whether current work allocations should or could become a permanent post.

Although, the Scottish office of UCU can demonstrate some positive outcomes from union involvement in the effort to resolve/minimalise the use of zero-hours contracts in two large Scottish institutions, UCU confirms that organising members in order to tackle job casualisation remains challenging. Evidence states people suffer in these types of contracts, however, when meetings are organised only a handful of people appear, as they are frightened that their future careers, however fragile, might be affected. In addition, often positive trends of change are stalled when senior people participating in the union-employer negotiations leave their departments and organisations.

Career structures

Career and promotion structures within universities are yet another challenge commonly experienced by women working in this sector. UCU members' experiences suggest such structures appear arbitrary. In other sectors, posts for which one might want to apply are created and are advertised, and are open to all applicants. In the education sector, one has to decide about their own readiness for promotion and present relevant evidence, for example, for a senior lectureship post. For those applying for promotion, any relevant paperwork has to be signed by a line manager before being submitted to a decision-making panel.

However, a culture of visibility (or long-hours culture) seems to be affecting the assessment of how hard-working, devoted and deserving of promotion people are. There is an expectation within the university context for staff to be seen, and part-time/contracted/casual workers are perceived as less committed and less hungry of career success. A "part-time/part-commitment" label is often used against female lecturers, researchers and teaching staff, who simply work less hours. Amongst UCU members are those women who have been turned down for promotion, because they had "employment breaks", (which in reality was maternity leave), or worked part-time. These situations are a result of prevailing attitudes, which understand being away from the workplace (even if this

is only for 6-9 months), as being “away from the field and out of touch with what is happening”. This view is particularly damaging for women, who are more likely to take care-related leave, or suspend their careers for some time. As the whole system of development and career progression lacks transparency, it is very selective in terms of outputs that are positively assessed in a promotion process.

The contribution and value of one’s work is narrowly understood, due to the influence of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) which assesses one’s work in terms of measurable impacts, such as the number of written articles (ranking of journals and readership of publications are particularly important) or an amount of secured research money that one brings to an institution. Promotions are, therefore, based upon performance in research rather than teaching. Outputs of people who worked fewer hours or with employment breaks will be less than somebody who worked in the role full-time for five years, or those who have heavy teaching workloads and little time for carrying out research activities.

Workloads, long hours and severe competition

Producing the outputs necessary for a successful promotion requires time and dedication. A fulfilment of all the work expectations and responsibilities in the university context, therefore, lends itself to a long hours culture. Although full-time contracts might state only 35-40 hours of work, the reality of work in higher education is perhaps closer to 60 hours a week. Recent years have brought some recognition of heavy workloads amongst university staff.

There has been some effort taken to measure individuals’ hours of work through various allocation models of work. However, UCU says that there is a lot of anecdotal evidence that this practice is not serving its intended purpose. When filling in those models truthfully, staff are often told by their managers not to include extra hours as “it might seem like they are working too much.” In many instances this, therefore, seems a meaningless exercise,

because any work above contracted hours remains undeclared to hide the heavy workloads¹¹.

Overall, there is great instability in the sector with cuts, redundancies, casualisation of work, and an introduction of the new excellence criteria, which most institutions use as a selection criteria to strengthen their position in REF cycles. This creates a culture of competition, which alienates people and dampens a collective thinking. Academia has become a battlefield for individual careers, rather than for common goals of a particular community or practice.

This observation might be a helpful insight to understanding persistent barriers to female careers (e.g. the overall low numbers of women professors and senior academic staff). This is why UCU in its most recent campaign for the University Governance Bill, which was passed in March 2016, called for a gender balance amongst the elected chairs of academic courts. As courts are the main decision-making structure, a greater female representation is believed to influence cultural change for the benefit of students, university workforce, community members and other stakeholders. If it happens to be that a woman and a union member sits on the university board, then that is a big opportunity for bringing a different perspective to the university workforce. UCU says:

“At the moment universities are run in a very old-fashioned way. They are a real establishment and probably the last of the big institutions that are still quite antiquated. Greater diversity and proportionality in the structure of courts (to include all range of stakeholders), will lead further changes.”

Employment policies

UCU informed the project that employment policies in the sector’s institutions vary from statutory minimum (ACAS code of practice), to much better developed and considered policies. The latter one tends to happen in the workplaces where unions have a recognised status. Most universities in Scotland claim to have adopted a flexible work policy, however many requests amongst UCU members have been rejected, and those who have been

¹¹ UCU is currently running a workload survey amongst its member, and its findings will be very helpful in quantifying the scale of this problem.

granted part-time work arrangements, are under pressure to deliver full-time work performance. Some institutions have better practices than others, and are more flexible in allowing people to work from “alternative workplaces”, but anecdotal evidence suggests that support staff are treated disproportionately less well than academic staff.

UCU also informed the project that employee relations in the university sector are problematic. Only some institutions have a clear framework for working with unions. In the last couple of years, there has been a definite shift towards practices and behaviours that undermine and marginalise unions and this has consequences for union members.

Staff are also less willing to complain and raise the issues of their concern to senior colleagues or their union reps, as they do not want to be seen as a trouble-makers (as mentioned before senior colleagues are likely to be reviewing their work or sitting on promotion panels).

Lastly, UCU noticed a worrying trend in relation to redundancies. There has been an increased use of protected conversations instead of proper collective redundancy processes. This means that behind closed doors staff are being asked to take redundancy/early retirement packages. UCU informed the project that women are more likely to find themselves subjected to this procedure, which is intimidating, and is not transparent.

Pay transparency

At first, it might seem that the pay scale in the sector is transparent, yet UCU see many discretions in standard pay, especially amongst professorial staff and those with additional responsibilities (e.g. Head of Programme, Head of Department, etc). A separate piece of UCU research indicated that universities spent millions of pounds on high salary packages, hotels, flights and other expenses for Vice-chancellors.

A UCU study using a Freedom of Information request¹² suggests Vice-chancellors at UK universities received average salary packages of £272,000 (based on figures from 152

¹² The UCU used Freedom of Information requests to ask UK universities and colleges questions about vice-chancellors' pay deals, including benefits and pensions, for the year 2014-15. The union also asked about money paid out for air fares, hotel accommodation and personal expenses. Eighteen of the 159 institutions contacted did not respond to the Freedom of Information request.

institutions) last year. Former Oxford chief, Prof Andrew Hamilton, was the highest paid, with a package, including benefits and pension contributions, of £462,000. The findings of the report suggest that the average flight expenditure of university bosses was £8,560.37 and £2,989.93 on hotels (based on figures from 128 institutions). Scottish Universities topped the ranking by spending the most on air travel and hotel accommodation¹³.

Although UCU understands that an ambassadorial role and frequent travel are incorporated into the role of university Chancellors, the high remuneration package accompanied with massive expense bills is considered unacceptable when most university staff, including lecturers, face constraints on pay, and experience job insecurity. UCU General Secretary, Sally Hunt, called for a frank and open discussion about transparency and arbitrary nature of senior pay in higher education. She promised that UCU would continue to campaign for a proper register of pay and perks at the top of our universities.¹⁴ Equal and fair pay for the same work is also a problem encountered in the Further Education sector¹⁵.

Conclusion

This paper described the most common problems experienced by women working in teaching and academic roles in primary/secondary and further/higher education contexts. Both contexts differ slightly, and might have different priorities for improving the working conditions, pay and career prospects of the female workforce.

However, these two contexts also share some similarities which can be synthesised as an increasing erosion of the status of the workforce. It seems that the once prestigious position of a school teacher, or the perception of secure jobs of a lecturer, tutor, researcher or a lab technician working in the public university have somehow been lost. Particularly concerning are the impacts of increasing work responsibilities on the health and wellbeing of female

13 For example, Strathclyde University spent the most on flights, £41,891 for Prof Sir Jim McDonald, Glasgow Caledonian University spent the most on hotels, £19,864.77 for Prof Pamela Gillies

14 Katherine Sellgren (11 February 2016) University bosses' pay 'inflation-busting', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-35541780>; accessed on 11.02. 2016

15 The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) has recently opened a statutory industrial action ballot in support of the EIS Further Education Lecturers Association (EIS-FELA) pay claim for 2015-16 for lecturers in further education colleges across Scotland. The EIS-FELA negotiators were seeking a fair pay settlement and pay equality across the sector in order to narrow pay differentials for lecturers doing the same job in different colleges.

teachers, lecturers and researchers. Both professional contexts play a very important role in educating and shaping the thinking of our society. Yet this paper showed that important role is often taken for granted or devalued, in order to meet the needs of competitive educational businesses. 21st century employment culture, which understands flexibility as a narrow and non-relational idea, is exploitative and predestined to fail in the long-term. However, the immediate effects of this faulty system are to be endured at the cost of a devoted workforce, who have increasingly less choice over work arrangements, and less opportunity to plan their lives. Findings presented in this paper support the claims that casualisation of employment is now reaching far beyond low-paid, low-prestige jobs.

There are some positive practices and plans on the horizon. Some progress has been made in terms of addressing teachers' workloads by establishing an 'Assessment and National Qualification' working group, to identify the demands of the different subjects and different qualification levels. Tackling bureaucracy, addressing the lack of training and unnecessary technological burdens to allow staff to focus on teaching and learning, have been received by unions as a positive step forward.

Similar steps should be undertaken to tackle workloads and underemployment of women in higher education. At the moment, eyes of policy-makers seem focused on efforts, such as Athena Swan Awards, which champion and support female careers in universities.

As this tends to be carried out within individual departments of higher education institutions, the picture of success remains patchy. The problems experienced by many women working in casualised employment and mistreatment they receive are also experienced within departments which are awarded championship for supporting women's careers. This Award, albeit helpful, doesn't change the entire landscape of higher education and, therefore, a real change-making policy is needed.



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