

The Transparency of Recruitment and Selection Processes for Management Positions and the Influence on Gender Equality.

How do HR managers, recruiters and headhunters contribute to transparency during recruitment and selection processes for management positions?

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Preface

Presented before you is my master thesis on ‘The Bounded Transparency of Recruitment and Selection Processes for Management Positions and the Influence on Gender Equality’. Over the past six months, I have been researching and writing my thesis towards my Masters in Strategic Human Resource Management at the Radboud University Nijmegen. During the research process I interviewed eleven HR managers, recruiters and headhunters involved in the recruitment and selection process of management positions in different organizations. I would like to thank all the respondents for their openness during the interviews and their willingness to participate in my graduation assignment. I would also like to thank my first supervisor, Channah Herschberg, for her feedback during this process. Furthermore, I would like to thank Yvonne Benschop, who was not only my second supervisor, but introduced me to the field of gender inequality during the courses ‘gender in organisaties’ and ‘gender and diversity’.

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to answer the following question: “How do HR managers, recruiters and headhunters contribute to transparency during recruitment and selection processes for management positions?”. Answering this research question contributes to the theoretical debate about transparency during recruitment and selection processes. Since the lack of transparency is seen as one of the reasons for gender inequality and is the most common in management positions, answering this question will indirectly also contribute to the theoretical discussion about how gender equality can be reached. To contribute to these debates, a qualitative research has been conducted. In the theoretical framework, a model for transparency during recruitment and selection processes has been developed, because no specific model was found in the literature. This framework was used to develop an interview guide. Semi-structured interviews with eleven different HR professionals were conducted. Moreover, documents such as job vacancies and websites texts have been analyzed. The analysis revealed that HR professionals claim that transparency is a very important topic within their recruitment and selection process. Analysis also showed that in many ways, organizations deviate from processes and decisions which possibly causes that processes are not so transparent as HR professionals claimed. This study contributed to the debate about transparency during recruitment and selection processes by showing different reasons for bounded transparency. Findings in this research indicate that motivation to report information, the motivation for transparency (intrinsic/instrumental) and the possibility for negative visualization in social media are all aspects that can negatively influence transparency in recruitment and selection processes.

Keywords: gender inequality, transparency, recruitment and selection processes, management positions

Introduction

Nowadays, many social inequalities in the labor market still exist (Triventi, 2013). Social inequality means the unequal treatment of people. Unequal in having the chance to develop, as well as the inequality in rewarding people (Vissers, Koopmans, Valkenburg, & Wezel, 1977). These social inequalities are mostly created during daily activities and in the organizational practices of the workplace (Acker, 2006). According to Acker (2006): “All organizations have inequality regimes, defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (p. 443). According to Milliken and Martins (1996), these different inequality regimes have different effects. Different diversities regimes bring different characteristics or values of group members. These different characteristics or values of group members can create differences in orientations towards issues (Milliken & Martins, 1996). For example, racial diversity brings different characteristics or values of group members than gender diversity, and therefore different orientations towards issues. Korpi (2000) stated that gender inequality is seen as one of the most important factors that must be considered in the analysis of inequalities and welfare states. Therefore, this study will only focus on gender inequality on the labor market.

Gender inequalities in management position seems to be the most apparent in Dutch management positions (Glassdoor, 2016). The Netherlands is the worst performing country in Europe, with only 26 percent women in management positions in 2014, (Glassdoor, 2016). According to Wright, Baxter and Birkelund (1995), the lack of women in management is probably a significant cause of gender inequality in organizations. These findings are confirmed by the popular concept of “the glass ceiling effect” (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001). The glass ceiling effect implies that gender disadvantages are stronger at the top of the hierarchy than the gender disadvantages in lower position of the hierarchy. Additionally, the gender disadvantages appear to become worse later in a person’s career (Cotter et al., 2001). Since gender inequalities seem to be the biggest in Dutch management positions and are probably a significant cause of gender inequality (Glassdoor, 2016; Wright et al., 1995), this research will focus on gender inequality in Dutch management positions.

Gender inequality in organizations is due to many different reasons. One reason is the lack of transparency during recruitment and selections processes (Van den Brink, Benschop, & Jansen, 2010). According to Bloisi (2007) recruitment can be defined as “the different activities of attracting applicants to organizations” (p. 107). Selection “consist of shifting through the pool of applicants and making decisions about their appropriateness” (Bloisi,

2007, p. 107). Transparency can be defined as “the internal aspects of organizations that are being made externally available” (Neyland, 2007). External visibility in this context means that organizations make information available for stakeholders such as potential applicants and organizational members involved in the recruitment and selection processes. It should be transparent to people who are potentially involved in the recruitment and selection process, what is being decided and why (Neyland, 2007). Making transparent what has been decided and why, enables stakeholders to make a decision with regard to their relationship with the organization (Rawlins, 2008). For example, in this context, it means that potential applicants are able to decide whether or not to apply. Based on transparent information about the amount of effort that a potential applicant has to put in the recruitment and selection process, they can decide if they are willing to apply or not.

During recruitment and selection processes, the lack of transparency often means that it remains unclear why an applicant has been selected or not (Van den Brink et al., 2010). It does occur that instead of taking into account the interest of the organization, selection committees prefer people who fit their own power network or people with a similar background (Bozionelos, 2005). According to Bozionelos (2005), people prefer colleagues who show similarities with themselves and therefore, selection committees do not always choose the best applicant. For example, when a selection committee only exists of men, this may result in selecting a male applicant instead of selecting the most suitable applicant (Bozionelos, 2005). Since many selection committees show a lack of diversity (often more than 90% of people in selection committees are white men), women will benefit from a more diverse selection committee (Barres, 2006). When assessments are based on vague criteria and the process of evaluation is not transparent, gender bias is more likely to occur. Although, transparency is not the ultimate solution for gender equality, it will definitely contribute (Van den Brink et al., 2010).

To create more transparency and reduce the possibility of power networks during recruitment and selection processes, internal aspects of organizational activities should become visible for stakeholders (Van den Brink et al., 2010). In this study it is assumed that transparency can be created by sharing more information about the recruitment and selection process in advance and standardizing and formalizing decisions. There should be transparency about the decisions, as well as transparency about the process. In the field of recruitment and selection, this implies that information about the course of the recruitment and selection process should be made available to potential applicants in advanced. Furthermore,

information about why an applicant has (not) been selected should be shared and understood by applicants.

Organizations, employees and (potential) applicants will benefit of increased transparency during recruitment and selection processes because it can facilitate equal opportunities (Neyland, 2007; Van den Brink et al., 2010). When organizations ensure equal opportunities for everybody, a richer and more diverse environment can be created. For example, in general, gender diversity accomplished more diversity (Milliken & Martins, 1996). A more diverse workforce is leading to the inclusion of different viewpoints, which resulting in a rise in productivity (Dickens, 1994). On the other hand, the upcoming trend of social responsible organizing (CSR) in the last two decades has also made it valuable for organizations to pay attention to the topic of gender inequality (Campbell, 2007). Attention should not solely be on the potential profits of organizations, but also to the planet and people. According to Dahlsrud (2008) one definition of CSR is: “A concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (p. 7). Since gender inequality is one of the social concerns, it is valuable for organizations to get more insight in transparency during recruitment and selection processes. Insight into the transparency of recruitment and selection processes can help to overcome certain aspects regarding gender inequality. Furthermore, employees can benefit from a more and transparent recruitment and selection process in the sense that diversity can ensure the work is more fun and interesting (Dickens, 1994). Finally, most important for this research, (potential) applicants will benefit from a more transparent recruitment and selection process because gender bias is less likely to occur within transparent recruitment and selection processes (Van den Brink et al., 2010).

Wright et al., (1995), made it clear that gender inequality in management positions makes a significant contribution to gender inequality overall. Additionally, the lack of gender inequality during recruitment and selection processes further leads to gender inequality as selection committees prefer people that fit their own network, and selection committees often consist mainly of men (Bozionelos, 2005). It is important to note that very few studies or literature provide insight in the effectiveness of measures taken by organizations to increase the number of women in management positions (Merens, Henderikse, & Pouwels, 2015). Even though it became clear that gender inequality still exists, and a lack of transparency during recruitment and selection process does contribute to gender inequality. Furthermore, there are hardly any studies that provide empirical evidence on how recruitment and selection

processes can become more transparent to reduce gender inequality (Van den Brink et al., 2010).

To contribute to the debate on transparency during recruitment and selection processes, this research will examine how HR managers, recruiters and headhunters involved in recruitment and selection processes contribute to transparency during recruitment and selection processes. More insight in transparency during recruitment and selection processes will indirectly contribute to the theoretical discussion of how gender equality can be reached. Also, this research hopes to contribute to the practical debate about gender inequality. The flow of women in management positions is high on the agenda of the Dutch labor organizations (Bleijenbergh, Van Engen, Vennix, & Jacobs, 2012). In order to contribute to these theoretical and practical debates, the following research question will be answered:

How do HR managers, recruiters and headhunters contribute to transparency during recruitment and selection processes for management positions?

This thesis is structured as follows; Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical framework in which gender inequality theories will be outlined, to provide a broader framework of the phenomenon of gender inequality. Thereafter, the concept of transparency will be discussed by introducing two different theories on transparency. These two theories will be used to generate a model about transparency, specified on recruitment and selection processes. In Chapter 3, it will be explained how data have been gathered and analyzed. In Chapter 4, the results will be outlined. The discussion and limitation will be presented in Chapter 5. Lastly, practical recommendations and recommendations for further research will be provided.

Theoretical framework

Gender (in)equality theories

Gender inequality struggles have a long history (Hook, 2010). Women have fought to vote, to work, to be educated and to have control over their own bodies (Ahl, 2004). Although attention has been paid to gender inequality issues repeatedly, gender inequality still exists in different areas (Vissers et al., 1977; O'Campo, Eaton, & Muntaner, 2004), such as education, politics and the labor market (Sen, 2001; Ridgeway, 1997; O'Campo et al., 2004).

In the past years, different organizations have tried to implement diversity programs in order to increase gender equality. Originally, these programs were focused on increasing women's participation in the labor market. Later on, these programs were used to increase the number of women in management positions (Merens et al., 2015). Research has shown that these programs have resulted in an increase of women participating in the labor market and a small increase within management positions (Merens et al., 2015). But limited research has been published on how organizations have tried to increase the number of women in management positions. Much of the research is focused on the perception of the organizations about what has been done to increase women in management positions, but not about how they have managed this (Merens et al., 2015). Although the number of women in management positions has increased in the past years, there is still a skewed distribution of men and women in management positions (Van der Lippe, Van Doorne-Huiskes, & Blommaert, 2014). Research has provided many reasons as to why gender inequality continues to exist within management positions. These reasons should be considered in the analysis of this research in order to see if these reasons also influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process.

According to Hook (2010), gender inequalities still exist due to men and women spending their time in participating in different activities. Generally, it is perceived that women are more active in household labor and are inclined to take more care in the household and for their children, with women tending to take more care of the household and children (Hook, 2010). Due to their responsibilities in the household, it is often assumed that there is less time left to participate in the labor market (Hook, 2010). On the other hand, men are often less active in the household labor and therefore, it is often assumed that men have enough time to participate full time in the labor market. Thus inequalities in the share of household labor has been linked to inequalities in the labor market and vice versa (Hook, 2010). The 'mommy track' is often used to explain these inequalities within the household labor and labor market (Crampton & Mishra, 1999). The 'mommy track' states that women will start

working part time or leave their job for a period of time to allow them to raise children (Korzec, 1997). Although participation of women in the workforce has increased remarkably in the 20th century (England, 2005), this gender division in the labor market and household labor has remained visible (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Curran, 1988). In this thesis it is interesting to see if these assumptions about the participation of women in the labor market and household labor, influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process.

According to Alvesson and Billing (2009), gender division in the labor market remains present in managerial jobs. Men dominate in the most prestigious professions, while women are more visible in caring jobs or even unpaid jobs (England, 2005; Acker, 1990). The fact that men dominate the management positions is explained as the 'pipeline problem' (Carli & Eagly, 2001). According to the pipeline problem, discrimination is caused because there are not enough qualified women to participate in these positions. Therefore, an increased and available number of qualified women for higher positions would lead to a decline in gender inequality within the labor market (Monroe & Chiu, 2010). Nowadays, research has shown that the pipeline problem is not a plausible theory. The pipeline is full of qualified women, but they are still not in management positions (Monroe & Chiu, 2010; Carli & Eagly, 2001). The evidence that the pipeline problem is not a plausible explanation for gender inequality in the labor market has led to the theory of the glass ceiling effect (Carli & Eagly, 2001).

The glass ceiling effect has been acknowledged as an obstacle in organizational hierarchies, that allows women to advance only to a certain level (Dreher, 2003; Carli & Eagly, 2001). According to Dreher (2003), the glass ceiling effect presents at least three problems. Firstly, the motivation and desire to work can decrease, when women perceive that their opportunity to grow is limited because of their sex. The second problem is the lack of diversity. When there is too much homogeneity within a team, poor and costly decisions can be made (Dreher, 2003). The third problem occurs in a tight labor market. Gender-based barriers can further decrease the supply of required talent and resources (Dreher, 2003). The three problems mentioned by Dreher (2003) focuses as 'supply-side' theories to explain gender inequality. These supply-side theories assume that ability and motivation factors are the reason for the distinction between male and female managers (Dreher, 2003). In this thesis it will be considered if these supply-side theories influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process.

Another explanation of the gender division in the labor market is to look at the demand side of the workforce. This demand side suggests that consciously or unconsciously, employers treat male and female applicants differently (England, 2005). Within this demand

side, there are two types of actions that contribute to this gendered workforce (England, 2005). Within the first action, hiring policies contains criteria other than the applicant's gender, and indirectly these criteria can be discriminating (England, 2005). For example, when flexibility is requested, it is often assumed that women do not have the possibility to operate flexibly because they need to take care of their children (England, 2005). According to England (2005), these kinds of policies are often not defined as discrimination that causes gender inequality, while in reality they do. The second action (the demand side), that contributes to the male dominated workforce, is statistical discrimination (England, 2005). By statistical discrimination employers use average characteristics of groups to predict individual workers' behavior (Schwab, 1986). For example, according to the statistics, women start having children at a certain age and there is the traditional assumption that this will result in women opting out of the workforce to raise their children (Kelan, 2014). Based on these average characteristics of a group, women who fit these average characteristics are in some cases not selected. In this thesis it will be considered if such assumptions also influence the recruitment and selection processes of management positions.

Another theory on the demand side of gender inequalities is based on stereotyping. Ryan, Haslam, Hersby and Bongiorno (2010), describe this as 'Think Manager-Think Male' (hereafter, TMTM). According to TMTM it is often assumed that men are more likely than women to possess the characteristics associated with managerial success. Characteristics including aggressive, objective and forceful are seen as important criteria for good management, and men are automatically associated with these characteristics (Ryan et al., 2010). So when management vacancies are fulfilled, it may possibly be the case that due to the automatically association with characteristics, male applicants are preferred. This theory is interesting in this research, since this can possibly influence the transparency of recruitment and selection processes.

According to Merens et al. (2015), there are different HR mechanisms that can be used to contribute to a more equal distribution of men and women in the workforce. Examples are training, management development, communication, recruitment and selection, working conditions and organizational development. In their research, it became clear that many organizations take action to increase an equal distribution of men and women in management positions. However, in the field of recruitment and selection action was taken less often. This is striking, since the recruitment and selection process provides mechanisms through which this gender division in the workforce can either be perpetuated or challenged (Curran, 1988). According to Van den Brink et al. (2010), the gender inequality during recruitment and

selection can, among other things, be decreased by decreasing the lack of transparency during recruitment and selection processes.

In this research, the focus will be on transparency during recruitment and selection processes, since organizations pay less attention to the mechanism of recruitment and selection as a tool to improve the distribution of men and women in their organization. This research focuses on the unequal chances for women during recruitment and selection processes. In this thesis the definition for gender inequality is focused on recruitment and selection and defined as: “the unfair opportunity for women to get selected and to get access to management position within organizations”.

Transparency

Nowadays, transparency in many areas of organizational activities is a very important topic for organizations (Neyland, 2007). Transparency in many areas is demanded by media, global political campaigning and corporate organizations (Neyland, 2007). Although many researchers recognize the importance of transparency and multiple definitions of transparency do exist, there is no comprehensive definition of transparency (Drew & Nyerges, 2004). The underlying reason for this is that the concept of transparency is used within many different areas, such as political, economical, financial and national security (Florini, 1999). The overall idea of transparency is that internal aspects of organizational activities are made externally visible (Neyland, 2007). However, multiple definitions of transparency, theories and measurement methods have been developed, but these theories are not specifically focused on recruitment and selection processes. In this research transparency refers to openness about why (not) a certain applicant has been selected for a job and how the recruitment and selection process will be and has been executed. It is expected that transparency improves fairness in the selection of applicants (Van den Brink et al., 2010).

Even though transparency seems to be a good tool to contribute to a more equal distribution of men and women, transparency also has some downsides and difficulties. One of the issues organizations need to deal with is the privacy of the applicant (Van den Brink, 2010). Organizations can have the intention to be fully transparent but due to their duty to protect the privacy of an applicant this is impossible. Besides, legal restrictions make it impossible for organizations to be fully transparent. According to Beckmann et al. (2012) transparency can also lead to an overload of information. It is possible to spread misinformation, when there is thoughtless provision of information to the public. Information

needs to be understandable for people in order to have a beneficial effect (Kolstad & Wiig, 2008).

There is not yet a framework for transparency that is specified on the recruitment and selection process. That is why general theories and frameworks about transparency will be used in this research to develop a framework for transparency specified on recruitment and the selection processes. The first framework that will be taken into account in this research are the three criteria about transparency from Wall (1996). According to Wall (1996), transparency consists of three criteria. First, it is important to make sure that the justifications of choices that have been made are accessible for the public. Decisions made behind closed doors are destructive for public trust. Avoiding justifications which are assessable but not understandable to the public is the second criterion for transparency, and called 'public understandability'. The third criterion for transparency is public acceptability. According to Wall (1996): "This standard rules out of modes of reasoning, methods of enquiry and beliefs and values that are not shared or could not be accepted by all reasonable citizens" (p. 503). This means that although an organization does act in a way that is seen as ethical, not all norms and values will always be accepted by everybody. The three criteria from Wall (1996), have been used in this study mainly due to the third criterion; public acceptability. This third dimension focuses on the different norms and values people can have and potential conflict that can be caused by this. These conflicts are not included in other models, but are important to consider because in recruitment and selection processes it can always occur that even though organizations do share information or processes, people will not agree on information or processes. The first two criteria are also important for this research but were not unique compared to other transparency models.

Secondly, the model of transparency of Drew (2003) will be used to develop the transparency model specified on recruitment and selection processes. In his study, Drew (2003) developed a framework for measuring decision transparency. For developing this framework, Drew (2003) examined the broad range of individual concepts regarding transparency. By doing this, Drew (2003) developed seven objectives of decision transparency.

Drew and Nyerges (2004) used four of these objectives in a later research towards decision transparency. The four objectives used in their research were clarity, integration into broader decision context, accessibility and logic/rationale. For these four objectives, Drew and Nyerges (2004) developed specific criteria, which will be used in this research as well. The three objectives Drew and Nyerges (2004) left out in their research, to simplify their

model, are accountability, truth and accuracy & openness. In this research it has been chosen to include all seven objectives to give a broader overview of the concept of transparency and not use the simplify model.

The model of Drew (2003) has been chosen for this research because he developed a broad framework that can be used for measuring transparency. This model highlights several concepts of transparency. This means that valuable information in the literature about transparency has already been included in the model (Drew & Nyerges, 2004). Even though these models are not specified on recruitment and selection processes, the models can be used to develop a model specified on recruitment and selection. For this research it means that transparency is not only focused on decisions transparency but also on transparency of the recruitment and selection process.

Transparency during recruitment and selection processes

For this research, an integrated model of Wall (1996) and Drew (2003) will be adapted. The criteria and objectives from Wall (1996) and Drew (2003) show similarities and differences. By combining the two models and specifying transparency for recruitment and selection processes, an integrated model has been developed. This integrated model is shown in Table 1.

Accessibility of decision criteria

The first criterion of Wall (1996) is public accessibility. This criterion focuses on the reasons and evidence of decisions being available for public. This criterion shows similarities with the accessibility objective of Drew (2003). This objective is about the possibility to request and receive documents that consist of information about decisions. For the integrated model, the first dimension, where these criteria and objective have been combined, will be called 'accessibility of decision criteria'. It is important that in advanced it is clear for insiders and outsiders, on what kind of criteria the decisions during recruitment and selection processes will be based. This can already be outlined in the vacancy for example. In vacancies, a clear overview of required qualifications can be given. Afterwards, the decisions made during the recruitment and selection processes should be available to stakeholders and applicants involved by the recruitment and selection process. This can be done by, capturing decisions in documents or special forms. This provides insight on which decisions are based and why applicants have been selected or not. Giving insight into criteria a prior, reduces the

possibility that applicants that fit the power network of the selection committee are selected, instead of the applicant that fits the criteria and is best for the organization.

Predetermination of the process

The second dimension for the integrated model is ‘predetermination of the process’. This dimension is based on the objective integration into broader decision context by Drew (2003). In later research, Drew and Nyerges (2004) developed four specifications for this objective, but for this research not all specifications are relevant, since those criteria are mainly developed for analyzing large quantities of documents. In this research, only two specifications formulated by Drew and Nyerges (2004) will be adapted. The first specification is about the completeness of the recruitment and selection processes. It is important that the process is fully laid out and disclosed before the start of the recruitment and selection processes. For example, how many rounds of interviews will be held, how many applicants are invited for a job interview, are there any assessment tests and to what extent does this assessment test influence the selection. It avoids changes in the recruitment and selection process that may privilege a certain applicant (Bozionelos, 2005). The second specification for ‘predetermination of the process’ is ensuring that the process is laid out in a single document to prevent cheating. For example, it can be laid out if an applicant needs to accomplish an assessment test. When the process is captured, it reduces the chance of cheating.

Clear, truthful and accurate decisions

The third dimension of the integrated model will be called, ‘clear, truthful and accurate decisions’. This is based on the public understandable criterion of Wall (1996) and the objectives truthful and accurate, clarity and openness (stakeholders involved) of Drew (2003). All four are focused on the interest that justifications should be understandable, honest and clear. In case of recruitment and selection processes, it is assumed that there should be clarity and honesty towards the applicant and other stakeholder involved about why an applicant is (not) selected. Drew and Nyerges (2004) made different specifications on how this can be achieved. Because these specifications do show similarities, it is chosen to integrate these dimensions in four specifications. For creating clarity and honesty in recruitment and selection processes, it is important that information is readily comprehensible. This means that it is clear what kind of applicant is searched for. This should be clear for internal stakeholders but also for potential applicants. According to the second criteria, this readily

comprehensive information should not include hidden information. This means that information, documents and decision do not include hidden meanings for potential applicants. The third specification states that there is a minimum use of jargon during the recruitment and selection process. Minimal use of jargon ensures that the process is understandable for all the involved stakeholders and applicants. The final specification is that decisions are made precise, simple and no strange measurements or vague arguments are used to select applicants.

Formalized, standardized and consistent decisions

The fourth dimension in the integrated model is based on the logic and rationale objective of Drew (2003). In the integrated model, this dimension will be called ‘formalized, standardized and consistent decisions’. In their research Drew and Nyerges (2004) specified this dimensions into three specifications. Only the first specification of Drew and Nyerges (2004) will be used for this dimension, to avoid repetition. In this specification it is stated that all decisions made during the entire recruitment and selection process should be consistent, standardized and formalized. Formalized indicates that, in advanced, it should be clear when which decisions will be made. The decisions made should be standardized and it must be clear how based on what decisions are made. Decisions will be consistent, when they are formalized and standardized. This reduces the chance that decisions are made in favor of certain applicants.

Fit organizational goals and policies

The fifth dimension refers to the idea that decisions during recruitment and selection processes should fit organizational goals and policies. This is based on one specification of the objective of accountability (Drew, 2003). In the model of Drew (2003), seven specifications were included. Most of these specifications did show repetition with other objectives and are already included in other dimensions. Such as clear, truthful and accurate decisions and processes and formalized, standardized and consistent decisions. However, one specification is not yet included in another dimension but important for transparency. This specification is the dimension ‘fit organizational goals and policies’. It is important that the decisions represent the existing goals and policies of the recruitment and selection processes of an organization. For example, when organizational policies prescribe that a new employee needs a number of years of work experience. Another example regarding the gender issues

can be set ratios for the distribution of men and women within management positions. These ratios can influence the recruitment and selection process.

Conflicts

The last dimension in this integrated model is 'conflicts'. This is based on the public acceptability objective of Wall (1996). According to Wall (1996), not each belief and value can be shared and accepted by all reasonable citizens. Decisions will never satisfy all people. To overcome these conflicts, it is important to see how organizations deal with these conflicts during recruitment and selection processes. The objective of Wall (1996) only focused on conflicts when citizens disagree with the decision. In this research the focus is on applicants who disagree with the decisions. Furthermore, conflicts like this can also arise within organizations. For example, when an applicant fits all in advanced determined criterion, but the selection committee prefers another applicant, even though this applicant does not meet all the criteria. How does the committee handle this conflict? Another example could be, when a decision does not meet the organizational policies and practices. For example, when a ratio for female and male employees is set, but the ratio exceeds by hiring the selected applicant. How does this influence the decisions made by a selection committee? Because conflicts do not only exist between the organization and the citizens but also within the organization or the organization and headhunters. This last dimension will cover all these possible conflicts.

In Appendix 1, all six formulated dimensions of transparency during recruitment and selection, including their specifications, can be found.

Integrated model	Wall (1996)	Drew (2003)
1. Accessibility of decision criteria	Public accessible	Accessibility
2. Predetermination of the process		Integration into broader decision context
3. Clear, truthful and accurate decisions	Public understandable	Truth and accuracy; Clarity; Openness (Stakeholders involved)
4. Formalized, standardized and consistent decisions		Logic and Rationale
5. Fit organizational goals and policies		Accountability
6. Conflicts	Public acceptable	

Table 1: Integrated model for transparency during recruitment and selection processes.

Methodology

Research strategy

This thesis is based on a qualitative study. This method is used because more in-depth insight can be gathered (Bleijenbergh, 2013; Symon & Cassell, 2012). In this research, more in-depth information about how HR managers, recruiters and headhunters contribute to transparency during recruitment and selection processes is generated. In addition, qualitative research can give insight in processes and activities in an organization (Bleijenbergh, 2013). In this research, insights into transparency during recruitment and selection processes will be gathered in order to contribute to the debate about gender inequality. According to Boeije (2005), qualitative research is also a suitable research method when specific persons, situations or organizations are part of the study. In this study, HR managers, recruiters and headhunters involved in recruitment and selection processes for management positions will be participated. HR managers and recruiters were included as respondents because these people are most involved in recruitment and selection processes, and therefore provide the most valuable information for this study, alongside specific headhunters. Headhunters have been chosen because headhunters can have a different role in recruitment and selection processes. They can have a different view on their contribution during recruitment and selection processes. The job of a headhunter is to find a suitable person for a certain position. Headhunters are often used for jobs where a lot of experience is required and whereby it is difficult to find the right employee. Headhunters are mostly used to recruit people for higher management positions (intermediair, 2008), and are therefore suitable to participate in this research. However, not all HR managers, recruiters and headhunters involved in recruitment and selection processes were included in this research. HR managers, recruiters and headhunters needed to be regularly involved in recruitment and selection processes of management positions in the business sector. Management positions were described as the first or second management layer. This did not include the board of directors. The HR managers, recruiters and headhunters made clear that they are normally not involved in the recruitment and selection processes of the board of directors. Because this is a different process that remains unclear for them.

Operationalization

The research approach in this research is deductive, indicating that the research object is approached from a clear framework (Bleijenbergh, 2013). In this research, the concept of transparency is described and operationalized in a broad framework. This has been done with

help of the existing literature and the integrated framework. The concept of transparency is divided into six different dimensions. Since this integrated model is already developed with the focus on recruitment and selection processes, these six dimensions have been used for the operationalization of the concept of transparency in this research. For each of these six dimensions, different indicators have been developed to be able to clearly specify the concept of transparency. The numbers of indicators differ for each dimension. These indicators are based on the specifications of the integrated model. These specifications give a clear overview of what a dimension covers. The final tree structure of the operationalization can be found in Appendix 1.

Data collection

To collect data in this thesis, triangulation has been applied. Triangulation is applied by using two different methods of data collections, namely interviews and documents. Triangulation by data collection makes it possible to research a phenomenon in-depth and to compare different perceptions of the respondents. Furthermore, triangulation enables to see the phenomena from different perspectives (Bleijenbergh, 2013). Within the interviews, insight has been generated on how the HR managers, recruiters and headhunters contribute to transparency during recruitment and selection processes. The documents that have been gathered were mainly used to analysis to what extent processes are described. Further to this, documents were used to see if it could be confirmed what was said during the interviews. It would be possible that the interviewees mentioned that the criteria during recruitment and selection processes are already mentioned in the vacancy, this however was not identified. These document also provided insight into the use of for example jargon and hidden information. Websites were used to see if processes and criteria were available for applicants.

The first data collection method was conducting interviews. The interviews were semi-structured. By semi-structured interviews, the questions are formulated in advance, but the order of the questions is flexible. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that all respondents get the same kind of question within a subtheme. This enlarges the reliability of the data collection (Bleijenbergh, 2013). A second advantage of semi-structured interviews is the possibility for the interviewer to move in a certain direction to discussed more specific information. This will generate more in-depth information (Bleijenbergh, 2013). According to Bleijenbergh (2013), more in-depth information improves answering the research question.

The semi-structured interviews were, among other things, developed based on the tree structure of the concept of transparency. Eight different blocks are developed and each block

has its own topic. The first block is used to acquire insight in general information, such as how the recruitment and selection process of management positions are normally held according to the respondent and what the role of the respondent is within the recruitment and selection process. In the second block accessibility of decisions criteria, the first dimension of transparency, was the main topic. In the third block the main focus was on predetermination of the process. Block four was about clear, truthful and accurate decisions and processes. In block five the main topic was the formalization, standardization and consistency of decisions. In block six it was discussed if decisions fit organizational goals and policies. Conflicts were discussed in the seventh block. The last block consists of questions specific about gender. The conducted semi-structured interview can be found in Appendix 2.

Respondents were found via snowball sampling. By snowball sampling, respondents voluntarily take part in the research instead of being chosen (Symon & Cassell, 2012). When one respondent has participated in the research, he or she identified some other possible respondents (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This method has been chosen since it was difficult to conduct multiple interviews in one or two organization. Because it became clear that there are not many organizations with a sufficient number of HR managers, recruiters or headhunters to collect data. Moreover, organizations did not recognize the still existing gender inequality or did not see it as an important topic and were therefore not willing to participate in the research.

Within this research, a few respondents were approached via the network of the researcher. These respondents were asked if they knew other respondents, after their commitment to participate. One advantage of this method is the inherent trust among potential participants (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). This trust increases the likeability that a potential participant is willing to participate and give honest answers. A second advantage is that participants are participating voluntarily and therefore, it is more likely that they are honest and open (Sadler et al., 2010). A third advantage of this method is that it leads to a diverse representation of respondents (Sadler et al., 2010). This assures a wide range of recruiters, HR managers and headhunters and generated insight from different angles. A disadvantage of this method, however, is that people are likely to volunteer other potential respondents that are similar to themselves (Sadler et al., 2010). This can result in a homogeneous sample. This is something that should be taken into account during the analysis and conclusion.

Thirteen interviews were conducted with HR managers, recruiters and headhunters involved by the recruitment and selection process of management positions. Finally, eleven

interviews were found useful for this research. It has been chosen to exclude two interviews because during the interviews it became clear that they were not often involved in the recruitment and selection process for management positions. Six respondents were involved in the recruitment and selection for internal positions within their own organizations and five respondents were involved in the recruitment and selection process for external organizations. In Table 2, more information about the respondents can be found. Together these respondents will be called HR professionals. The eleven HR professionals worked for eight different organizations. The HR professionals working in recruitment and selection companies consisting of six to forty-eight employees. The organizations of the respondents involved in the internal recruitment and selection process, consist of at least 100 employees. After analyzing the eleven useful interviews, point of saturation was achieved. No new information was found in the last two useful interviews.

Alongside the conducted interviews, documentation was gathered. It depended on the availability and willingness of the respondents how many documents were collected. After every interview, respondents were asked if they had a few examples of vacancies available that could be used for this research. Finally, it became clear that all vacancies were on the website, so these websites have been used for analyzing the vacancies. Other information from the website was also gathered including the recruitment and selection processes. However, this information was only available on one website.

Respondent	Sex	Function	Sector
1	Female	Headhunter	Food & Logistics
2	Female	Internal recruitment	Multiple sectors
3	Female	Internal recruitment	Multiple sectors
4	Female	Internal recruitment	Multiple sectors
5	Female	Headhunter	Finance
6	Male	HR manager (intern)	ICT
7	Female	HR manager (extern)	ICT
8	Male	HR manager (extern)	Finance
9	Male	External recruitment	Multiple sectors
10	Male	Internal recruitment	Legal & Finance
11	Male	Internal recruitment	Legal & Finance

Table 2: Data respondents.

Data analysis

In order to answer the research question, several steps have been taken. All the conducted interviews have been recorded. Thereafter, all interviews have been fully transcribed. This has been done with the help of a computer program, which played the recording at a reduced speed. Since the research approach is deductive, the coding has also been done in a deductive way. The concept of transparency during recruitment and selection processes has been operationalized. Firstly, the indicators of the tree structure were used by the researcher to code the transcripts. In order to increase the reliability of the analysis the first step of coding has been done twice. This decreases the chance that valuable information is not included in the research and also checks if the researcher judged the transcript in the same way the second time. In the next phase, the indicators were ordered into the six different dimensions of transparency in order to structure the codes. Finally, these ordered codes have been used for the analysis.

With coding the interviews, it was attempted to generate insight into how the HR managers, recruiters and headhunters contribute to transparency during recruitment and selection processes. This gave insight in for example, if previously the processes had been laid out, if criteria had already been mentioned in vacancies and if respondents felt that this needed to change. After coding the interviews, the documents were used to verify if this has been the case. Since little information was available on websites and respondents did not send any documents in addition to the interviews, documents were not coded. However, the fact that less information was available during analysis of the website was taken into account during the analysis since this is also valuable information. Finally, to answer the research question, an overall discussion about the contribution to transparency of HR managers, recruiters and headhunters was given.

Because this is a qualitative research, it should be mentioned that both researcher and respondents are subject to the research process. The researcher and the respondents are part of the world and this makes it difficult to stand outside their sociolinguistic constructs (Van de Ven, 2007). Therefore, it is difficult to see everything objectively and no form of inquiry can be value free (Van de Ven, 2007).

Research ethics

It is important to respect the anonymity of the respondents and to avoid that respondents are traceable (Symon & Cassell, 2012). For example, when one of the respondents reveals sensitive information that ends up at the organization he or she is working for, undesirable

situations can arise. To avoid such situations, anonymity has been handled with care in this research. Participants are more likely to provide honest answers and socially desirable answers are less likely, when respecting their anonymity, (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The anonymity was respected by not mentioning any names in the transcripts, documents and analysis. Likewise, it was not revealed to other respondents or organizations who participated in the research (Oliver, 2010). Information that could have been used to discover who has been interviewed is left out in the final results sent to respondents who were interested. Transcripts have only made available to the first supervisor of this research. Regarding the documents, it has not been revealed who made which documents available. Additionally, names and references to persons have been removed in order to protect the privacy of people.

Results

In this part of the research the results will be shown. The results are structured according to the six different dimensions of transparency during recruitment and selection processes, as discussed in Chapter 2. The indicators within the six different dimension will be discussed as well. The results will be supported with quotes from different respondents.

Accessibility of decision criteria

The first dimension that has been analyzed is the dimension of accessibility of decision criteria. Within this dimension, it was stated that decisions criteria should be accessible. During the recruitment and selection process it should be able to request and receive information about why certain decisions have been made.

Possibility to request and receive information

The analysis made clear that all respondents work with a form whereby information about decisions during the recruitment and selection process is described. All respondents work with online systems that give them the possibility to register information about applicants and give insight why certain decisions have been made. These systems were used for every applicant that applied to a vacancy. Even when an applicant was rejected based on their curriculum vitae (hereafter CV), this was recorded in the systems. All respondents recognized the importance of such a system, and they had two different reasons for this. First of all, all respondents mentioned it is important to describe all information for their own interest. The following quote demonstrates this:

“I have the advantages that it has been done well in the past. Now, when I get in contact with someone, I will check the system first. Then you see, for example, when someone was rejected because he or she did not present well in the conversation. Then, you can immediately think something about that. Of course, someone can develop him or herself, but when the feedback is based on fundamental things, then you already think, maybe I should not invite him or her. So in this way I do have the benefits”. – Respondent 10.

This quote shows that the respondent uses the system to see if an applicant applied before and when this is the case, why certain decisions have been made previously. Besides their own interest, respondents also mentioned the advantages for applicants. Even though applicants did not have access to these online systems themselves. Due to the systems, respondents were

able to request information about applicants and decisions that have been made when asked for and therefore, recruiters could provide comprehensive feedback.

All respondents agreed on the fact that it is important to describe information about why certain decisions have been made well. But some respondents acknowledged that capturing information about why a certain decision was made was not the most interesting part of their job. Therefore, in some cases less attention is paid to capturing information. According to one of the respondents this does negatively influence the quality of the captured information. This decrease in quality of information that has been captured can influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. Because when the amount of information or the quality of the information decreases, it can affect the possibility for applicants to request and receive honest information. When one of the respondents was asked if enough information was captured to request and receive information or if this should be less or more, the answer was as follows:

“No, no actually sometimes this could be even more. You see that some colleagues are very good in giving feedback, and very clear. Others are not so good. It should be closer to each other and the responsibility does not stop when a good conversation has been done and someone proceeds to the next round”. – Respondent 3.

This quote shows that the respondent does see the added value of capturing more and clear information. This respondent also made clear that it is the duty of recruiters to ensure that information is captured in the right way. This respondent contributes to this by ensuring that people involved in the recruitment and selection process capture enough, clear information. The respondent felt the duty to address someone when someone failed to capture enough information. The fact that this respondent felt responsible to address others on the fact that enough and clear information needs to be captured, can contribute to the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. Sufficient amounts of clear information captured in systems, enables the possibility to request and receive information at a later point.

Information about why a certain candidate has been chosen

Besides the possibility to request and receive information, respondents were also asked if the criteria a respondent was selected on was made clear to the applicant in advance. It became clear that there was a distinction between hard and soft criteria. Hard criteria were seen as criteria that can easily be described beforehand, such as education level, number of years of

work experience and specific specializations or certificates. Soft criteria were seen as difficult to capture because these were competences such as motivation and analytical skills. According to the respondents it is often hard to explain why an applicant did not get the position because these soft criteria are hard to measure. This differed from the hard criteria where it was considered easy to check if someone has a certain education level or certificate. It also became clear that besides the fact that respondents felt that it was more difficult to judge soft criteria, respondents also mentioned that they did not feel comfortable being honest about these soft criteria:

“Because I am easily afraid to insult someone. And that is something I want to avoid. (...) But somewhere, it goes against your feelings. Because you want to reject someone because of the truth, but sometimes the truth is pretty painful”. – Respondent 10.

This quote shows that this respondent does not feel completely comfortable with being honest because in some cases the truth is too painful. During the interview the respondent made clear that painful rejections are often based on soft criteria. The respondents acknowledge that it is more difficult to reject someone because your gut feeling says that this applicant does not fit, instead of telling someone he or she does not fit due to the years of work experience. It can be possible that HR professionals do have the gut feeling that someone does not fit the vacancy but are not able to explain why, and experience difficulties with being honest. This may be explained by the theory of Ryan et al. (2010) whereby it is stated that consciously or unconsciously it is often assumed that men are more likely than women to possess managerial characteristics. This theory can possibly be used to explain if and why gut feelings lead to the assumption that male applicants are more suitable. When using the theory of Ryan et al. (2010) this could be explained by stating that gut feelings give the possibility to automatically relate characteristics to male applicants.

In general, it can be concluded that the respondents all agreed on the fact that it is really important to ensure that information can be requested and received by applicants. Internally this is arranged with online systems where all information about decisions is recorded. These systems are used to ensure that applicants can have information about why certain decisions have been made. Regarding information about why a certain applicant has been chosen, it became clear that respondents felt more difficulties with providing information about soft criteria compared to hard criteria. This was mainly due to the influence of gut feelings that play a role by soft criteria's. The influence of these gut feelings on the

information why a certain candidate has been chosen, can affect the transparency. Gut feelings can possibly ensure that there is not much information available, because HR professionals are not able to describe it, or as shown above, are afraid to be honest about it.

Predetermination of the process

The second dimension is the predetermination of the process dimension. In this dimension two indicators were used. The first indicator states that information should be consolidated in a policy. The second indicator states that the recruitment and selection process needs to be fully laid out and disclosed.

Consolidation of the recruitment and selection process in a policy

Respondents were asked to describe the recruitment and selection process as they are familiar with. The analysis showed that ten out of eleven respondents documented their selection process before the recruitment and selection process starts. Some of the respondents did this in policies, others did this by confirmation of orders. Confirmation of orders are contracts between HR professionals and their clients. Appointments about the recruitment and selection processes with clients, such as deadlines and the number of applicants presented by the organization, are described in confirmation of orders. Only one of the respondents did not work with a consolidation of the recruitment and selection process in a policy.

This finding can contribute to the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. It makes it more difficult to cheat during the process because processes are described in advanced and processes are more clear for people involved.

Recruitment and selection process is fully laid out and fully disclosed

Regarding the indication that recruitment and selection processes should be laid out and fully disclosed, it became clear that there was a difference between the respondents involved in the recruitment and selection for the internal organization and respondents involved in external recruitment. Respondents involved in the internal recruitment did have a predetermined process that was always the same regardless of the position to be filled. Respondents involved in external recruitment stated that the processes are mostly the same, but in some cases it does differ because clients request for this. However, when processes differ, this is always described in the conformation of order that has been made before the recruitment and selection process starts. The analysis showed that respondents really see the added value of a predetermined process. This is shown by the following quote: *“It is really important that it is*

structured, otherwise you will follow your gut feeling way to fast. I mean, the whole recruitment process is partly based on gut feeling, but you may have good arguments” (Respondent 4). This quote shows that the respondent finds it really important that the recruitment and selection process is predetermined. This structure enables the respondent to describe gut feelings and to formulate good arguments. This made clear that the respondent considers it to be important to have good arguments besides the gut feelings. The fact that the respondent feels this way can possibly contribute to the transparency of the recruitment and selection processes. Bozionelos (2005) made clear that people do have the tendency to prefer people who show a similar background. Therefore, the best applicant is not always chosen. If HR professionals are more focused on good arguments instead of gut feelings, it is less likely that the applicants with a similar background is chosen instead of the best applicant.

Analysis of the internet websites and vacancies showed that only one organization put their recruitment and selection process on their website. This organization described how their recruitment process would look like from beginning to end. For example, what was expected in the first round, what was expected in the second round and so forth. This openness about the recruitment and selection process contributed to the transparency of the process. Applicants know what to expect in advance, when information is available. Some respondents did not exactly know what was shown to the applicants in advance:

“Uhm, I think that we do have something on our website how we generally approach it, and that we like to keep speed in the process. And that they can expect response from us within two days. But I would not want to send the entire Excel file to them. But we always ensure that when someone has had the first conversation, they know how the process will look like. When he or she can expect something. And yes, we always ensure that this happens. So that we will call or mail on time”. – Respondent 7.

This quote shows that the respondent does not see the added value of publishing the predetermined process beforehand. The interview made clear that this Excel file included the recruitment and selection processes for all possible function within the organization. According to the respondent it was not useful for the applicants to receive this file in advance. However, analysis made clear that all respondents do ensure that applicants are informed about the process after their first job interview.

When respondents were asked if they think that information about the process should be available in advance, respondents did not see the added value of putting the process on a

website or in a vacancy. Informing people after their first job interview was considered to be enough. Only one organization did inform applicants before they applied and there were multiple reasons for this as the following quote demonstrates:

“So we do it really conscious. Really important that people do know. Uhm, yes there are multiple things and uhm it is really important to be honest. So people do know where they choose for. It is a bit of self-reflection. People who, uhm let’s say it flattened, who do not know what they are doing but just react on something. Uhm those people do lose because they get scared by the amount of steps. And that is fine, because that is not a match. And uhm at the same time it is really important that people do know what steps we take. Even for practical reasons. We are half April and I want to quit my job before the 1th of May. What kind of pace do I need to take. But also to let people know that it will take preparation”. - Respondent 2.

This quote explains that this respondent does take into account the interest of the applicants. The respondent does have multiple reasons for this. On the one hand, it is already a selection method, since in some cases the amount of steps already scares people. On the other hand, it is also because of practical reasons. Informing applicants in advance of the process is seen as something that contributes to the transparency according to the integrated model. When potential applicants are informed in advance, they do know what to expect and this is more transparent for potential applicants.

Besides the predetermination of the process, respondents were also asked if there was the possibility to deviate from the predetermined process. All respondents acknowledged that deviation from the standard process is possible. In some situations, the possibilities to deviate from the standard recruitment and selection process were even described in advance. Within two organizations, they have a policy which allows applicants who have had an in-house day with the organization, and therefore already seen by the organization, can skip one part of the process. These deviations of the process have been described beforehand and are communicated to the potential applicants on the in-house day. In this way deviation of the process does not seem to impair the transparency of the recruitment and selection process since all the involved parties are aware of the possible deviation.

Further to these described deviations, respondents also acknowledged that there were other possibilities to deviate from the recruitment and selection process without any description beforehand. The transparency of the recruitment and selection process may

possibly impacted, when this occurs. Because not all the involved parties are aware of the possibilities to deviate from the process. The most common reasons for deviation are acceleration of the process and delaying the process, when more time is needed. The first case was often mentioned. It became clear that organizations like to ensure a quick recruitment and selection process, when organizations need to fill a positions on short notice. This can be done by skipping the assessment test, or doing these tests after hiring. In some cases, fewer rounds of job interviews were held. Even though the analysis did not show any clues that indicated if acceleration of the process influences the preference for a certain gender, it is something that needs to be considered as possible influence. According to England (2005), it is often assumed that women do not have the possibility to operate flexible because they need to take care for their children. This is something that can influence the recruitment and selection processes when speed is required.

The second reason for deviation can be caused by the organization but also by the applicant. In some cases, organizations did have some doubts about an applicant and therefore decided to keep an extra job interview. On the other hand, in some cases applicants needed some extra time and extra information to make a decision.

All respondents indicated they do not mind the possibility to deviate from the predetermined recruitment and selection process. Respondents did see this as essential in order to meet organizational goals. In this case the respondents did not acknowledged transparency as an important aspect of the recruitment and selection process. These findings are in contrast with the CSR theory of Dahlsrud (2008). As Dahlsrud (2008) described, attention should not only be paid to profits of the organization, but also to the planet and people. In this case it seems to happen that instead of integrating social and environmental concerns in the organizations (Dahlsrud, 2008), profits are considered to be more important than the people.

In general, it can be concluded that organizations do predetermine their process beforehand and this process is described in a policy or confirmation of order. However, it should be noted that these policies were in most cases not available for applicants. Only after the first job interview, applicants were informed about the process. Therefore, applicants do not know what to expect before they apply, which can influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. None of the respondents did see the added value of informing the respondent before applying, except one organization that already informs applicants beforehand. Regarding the deviation of the process, it became clear that all organizations deviate from the predetermined process sometimes. Two organizations already

describe these possibilities for deviation in their process, but the other organizations did not. However, all respondents wanted to have the opportunity to deviate from the process and did not see any harm in deviation from the recruitment and selection process. In this study it is really important to consider the possible effects on transparency of the recruitment and selection process. Deviation can ensure that the processes is not clear for applicants which can influence the transparency of the processes.

Clear, truthful and accurate decisions

The third dimension that has been analyzed is clear, truthful and accurate decisions. This dimension exists of four indicators. The indicators focused on the fact that decisions should be understandable, honest and clear towards applicants. Therefore, information needs to be readily comprehensible, no information should be withheld, there should be a minimum use of jargon and decisions should be simple and precise.

Information, documents and decisions are readily comprehensive

Regarding the condition that decisions should be readily comprehensible, none of the respondents did see any problems, even though there were large differences among the respondents. According to all respondents, applicants always receive feedback by mail or phone calls. All respondents worked with rejections by mail, when applicants were rejected based on their CV in the first selection round. However, there was a large difference how this was executed. Most of the respondents used standard emails to reject applicants. In these emails some selection criteria that have been used to make a selection were mentioned. According to the respondents, this enables applicants to reflect on their own application. Applicants were able to call for further explanation, when they had any questions. Only three respondents made clear that they assumed that it was really important to always give personal feedback, no matter what. They admitted that this takes a lot of time, but you need to take time for this. One of the respondents described this as follows: *“They put in the effort to be enthusiastic about you, sending in their CV and doing their best. The least you can do back is to share your experience with them. So yes, I consider this to be a very important aspect”* (Respondent 4). This quote shows that this respondent is willing to go in depth about why an applicant has been rejected. The respondent feels the need to give detailed information, specified on why a certain decision has been made because applicants also put efforts in their application. The willingness to go in depth while rejecting applicants is something that can

contribute to a more transparent recruitment and selection process because applicants will gain more detailed information about why a certain decision has been made.

Other respondents did acknowledge that it would be better to give personal feedback, but felt this takes too much time. Therefore, they did not plan to change their procedures. The decision to not give personal feedback does not contribute to the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. Information is not readily comprehensive when applicants are rejected by standardized emails. Applicants have to come up with their own reasons why they are rejected and therefore, do not have clear understanding of why certain decisions have been made.

After the first selection round, based on the CVs, all respondents started with job interviews. After job interviews, all respondents did get personal feedback by phone. Because most people already were rejected after the first selection, it took less time to give personal feedback to the remaining applicants. The personal feedback after the first selection round does make information readily comprehensive, which can be a good thing for transparency.

Information, documents and decisions do not include hidden meanings

Even though all applicants did receive personal feedback after their first job interview, the analysis made clear that this personal feedback often included hidden information. Due to laws respondents were not able to be honest, and therefore rejections did include hidden information. Respondents mentioned that hard criteria like age and sex were not described in the vacancy because this is legally not allowed, but often this was a criterion. Age was mentioned by all respondents as an example of a hard criterion. It was mentioned that older people were often rejected because they were not perceived as a good investment for organizations since they were too old. However, none of the respondents did honestly communicate about this criterion to the elderly applicant. Sex on the other hand was only mentioned a few times. In most cases it was stated that this preference was because of team compositions. However, in contrast to the recruiters involved by the internal recruitment, recruiters involved by external recruitment received requests for male applicants purely based on gender assumptions instead of preferences because of team composition. Two of the respondents told that they did agree on these kind of requests. And in the beginning, clients were even asked for their preference: *“Officially you cannot write it down. So we will never do that. We ask, and we always say we are not allowed to ask, but be honest, man or woman, age?”* (Respondent 1). This quote shows that this respondent just asks clients for their preference. According to Ryan et al. (2014) these requests for a certain sex can be explained

by the TMTM theory. Hereby, it is assumed that males are better managers than females because certain characteristics are automatically ascribed to males and therefore clients can have the preference for male applicants.

During the interview it became clear that this respondent considers this to be normal. No plans were made to change this kind of discrimination; the respondent even mentioned reasons why the organization act like this: *“Yes, you do not capture this, but you ask for it. It does not make sense to introduce a 63-year-old women when they want someone with a maximum age of 40” (Respondent 1)*. This quote shows that the respondent thinks that it is better to ask for gender or age preference because otherwise they will introduce people who do not have a chance of progressing in the recruitment process, which is unfair. On the other hand, it can also be considered that this does not contribute to transparency because certain groups do not have fair opportunities and this is even without them knowing it. It is important to consider if it is really fair to cut out a certain group in advance, because they will never stand a change of progressing in the recruitment and selection process.

Only one of the respondents involved in the recruitment and selection process for external organizations claimed to not agree with these kind of requests because the organizations does not want to be associated with discrimination. Only if the respondent did have the feeling that the preference for a certain sex is in the interest of the team composition they took this request into account. In these cases, it was claimed that the organization always offered the best applicant, even if this did not fit the preference of the client. This was shown in the following quote: *“So I told the client, she is just perfect, I think you should not be so difficult. And then they said, okay we will do it. And that goes really well, she is still there” (Respondent 9)*. This quote shows that the respondent took an advisory role. Even though the client preferred a male applicant, this respondent found a female applicant that suited much better. Actions like this can contribute to a more transparent recruitment and selection processes because applicants are chosen on criteria that were known in advance, and not on criteria that were kept secret.

However, when focusing on the field of gender inequality it is important to consider when organizations claim that they choose ‘the best applicant’. It can be assumed that it still happens that some competencies are still automatically more related to a certain gender (Ryan et al., 2010). Organizations claim that they selected the best applicant but instead they choose the applicant that is automatically related to the required characteristics.

Besides the hidden information within organizations about sex and age, the interviews made also clear that a lot of HR professionals are not honest towards applicants about other

things. The following quote shows that this respondent does not feel the need to be honest: *“Uhm, you can be honest about it. The question is if you should always be honest to the applicant” (Respondent 7)*. This quote demonstrates this respondent does not see the added value of being always honest about information. When respondents were asked for their reason why they consider if they always need to be honest to applicants, the following was stated: *“And, of course, you do not want to be visualized negative on the social media. So you always need to think, how will I bring something, how will I tell something” (Respondent 5)*. This shows that for the respondent the reason behind this hidden information is the fear of negative visualization in social media. This was mentioned by multiple respondents. It seems that social media possibly holds HR professionals back in their transparency towards applicants.

Minimal use of jargon during recruitment and selection process

Another indicator of this dimension was about the use of jargon. Some respondents sometimes experienced the use of jargon but did not see this as a problem during the recruitment and selection process. Respondents mentioned that when jargon was used, this was mostly understandable for themselves. But when information was not understandable because of jargon it did not bother the respondents. They did not mind asking other people to explain a bit more. Respondents explained in some cases jargon was a barrier for the applicant, but they did not see this as something that needed to change. One of the respondents explained this as follows:

“No, definitely not. (...) I will give an example. We do a lot in logistics. Logistic services. Organizations are mentioned as 3PL. And knowledge within a 3PL organization was required. We have rejected someone because he did not have that knowledge. We described this in the mail. Did we get a reaction that he did worked in teams. He thought that 3PL were groups. This makes clear that you are clearly not from that branch”. – Respondent 1.

This indicates the respondent does not mind that jargon is used because it gives insight into the knowledge of an applicant. Applicants do need to know some jargon and if they do not know it, this tells the recruiter something about their experience or knowledge. This was the overall opinion of the respondents.

It is possible that applicants not fully understand the process, when information is not clear for applicants because jargon is used. Transparency can be influenced, when applicants

are not able to fully understand the process. Although respondents claim that it is already an indication of quality, it can also be used as a reason to reject applicants. It could be possible that the use of jargon influences gender inequality, but that did not become clear during the analysis. This can be influenced by the phenomena that selection committees do have the tendency to make undesirable concessions to the quality of women (Van den Brink, Blommaert, Leest & Elfering, 2016). In the research of Van den Brink and Benschop (2012), it became clear that selection committees pronounce that criteria for selecting applicant are universal and gender-neutral. However, Van den Brink and Benschop also showed that: “it can also blind committee members to the production or reproduction of possible inequalities” (p.513). In this case it could possibly occur that understanding jargon is seen as gender-neutral and universal, but meanwhile women are more negatively evaluated.

Information, documents and decisions are precise and simple

Analysis of the vacancies on the website of the organizations the respondents worked for made clear that vacancies are overall very simple (not considering the hidden information it often includes). Hard criteria are often written down in a rank, which makes it possible to easily find the hard criteria. Soft criteria were often not described in these vacancies or described in a text, which made these soft criteria less precise and simple. The findings of the vacancies and websites show the same results as the interviews. Hard criteria are more precise and simple, soft criteria are more difficult since these soft criteria are often influenced by gut feelings.

In general, it can be said there is hidden information in the rejection of applicants. This hidden information occurs in both hard and soft criteria that are used during recruitment and selection processes. Respondents acknowledged that they are not always honest but did not plan to change this because they are afraid for negative virtualization in media. So it may be a possibility that fear for negative virtualization in media influenced the transparency of the recruitment and selection processes. Besides the hidden information, it becomes clear that the use of jargon was not seen as a problem by the respondents.

Standardized, formalized and consistent decision points

In this fourth dimension, it was stated that decisions should be made standardized, formalized and consistent.

Standardized decision points

The analyses showed that ten out of eleven respondents do work with standardized decision points in the recruitment and selection process. In these standardized procedures it was clearly set out when decisions regarding applicants need to be made. For the respondents involved in recruitment and selection of external companies, decision points were set with the respondent and the client. It became insightful when decisions should be made, and how many applicants should be selected for the next round.

The analysis of the respondents involved in internal recruitment, showed a small deviation with regard to the respondents involved in the external recruitment. One of the respondents did not work with standardized decision points. This respondent made the decision right on the moment, when it felt right for him. This following quote is a good illustration of the fact that this respondent did not work with standardized decision points:

“I had eight conversations and I already thought, this must be an amazing guy. And uhm he already had a few questions about the office etc., how that worked. One day later I would fly to Italy and then I said, well come along. I will arrange a ticket.”– Respondent 6.

This quote shows that this respondent does not work with standardized decisions but decides when this feels right. This may not contribute to the transparency because in this case other applicants do not get the opportunity to prove themselves since one of the applicants was already asked come on a trip to Italy. The other respondents claimed to work with standardized decision points.

Respondents also emphasized that they felt that it was really important to have a standardized process and decision points, to ensure that applicants know what to expect. One of the respondents spoke of his own experience of an organization which did not followed a standardized process or had agreed upon any formalized decision points. The consequences were that the recruitment process was longer and no one took responsibility for the decisions they were required to make. After six rounds, still no decision had been made. Another respondent did recognize this problem and stated the following: *“What you should capture is who is responsible for what within the process and who is going to make which decision. There should not be a surprise that influences the process. Then you will lose your candidate”.* (Respondent 1). It is clear that this respondent does recognize the importance of standardized decision points in order to keep your applicants in the process. Three respondents mentioned that they often experience astonishment by applicants due to the fact

that they do have such a standardized process and clear decision points. The following quote shows this:

“But sometimes I see a bit of astonishment, maybe dependent on other procedures, whereby they are literally in procedure for months. And they actually do not know when they will hear something. Or how many conversations are there yet? And then with us, so to speak in one or two rounds, within two weeks they are done. Sometimes it is like, oeh that goes fast. But for me, it feels transparent”. – Respondent 11.

In some cases, recruitment and selection processes do take longer as nobody feels the responsibility to make decisions. This quotes makes clear that respondents are indicated by applicants that standardized decision points are really important in order to proceed in the process.

Formalized decision points

Regarding the formalization of decisions during recruitment and selection process, all respondents were unanimous. The analysis made clear that during the recruitment and selection process there were two areas whereby decisions were formalized, namely the CV selection and the assessment test.

All respondents worked with formalized decision points in the first round. The first round was the same in all organizations, whereby a selection of the CV was made. In this round respondents worked with formalized decision points such as years of work experience, education level, sometimes specialization and more formalized points. According to the respondents, these formalized decision points were always described in the vacancies and available for applicants. Some organizations did work with assessment test. Decision points were formalized by determining minimal scores, when these tests were used to test IQ scores. These scores were known by applicants before making these assessment test. The fact that required scores were made available to applicants is something that can contribute to the transparency of the recruitment and selection processes. Since applicants know what to expect and deviation from these scores is therefore more difficult for organizations. Besides, it may also prevent cheating during the process. Bozionelos (2005) made clear that in some cases selection committees do have the tendency to prefer applicants that fit their own interest, instead of the applicants that is best for the organization. When minimum scores are set in

advance, it may assure that the ‘best applicant’ for the organization is chosen instead of the applicants that fits the network of the selection committee.

All respondents mentioned that besides the CV check and assessments test the recruitment and selection process was based on gut feeling and thus not formalized. These decisions based on gut feeling were mostly made after job interviews. These decisions can influence the transparency of the processes since no clear information towards applicants can be provided about why certain decisions have been made.

Consistent decision points

Regarding the consistency of decision points analysis made clear that still in a lot of cases exceptions are made. In most organizations included in this study decisions are formalized and standardized, but decisions are not consistent due to the exceptions that have been made. Respondents made clear that also in cases of set scores for assessment test, exceptions are still made. This may influence the transparency because the possibility for exceptions enables respondents to deviate from policies and to select the applicant that is, for example, known by the selection committee instead of the most suitable applicant.

Overall it can be stated that on first sight it seems to be that decisions are standardized and formalized, which can contribute to the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. However, when looked more critically, it becomes clear there is still a lot of deviation from these standardized and formalized decisions. This can influence the transparency of the processes since it can enable selection committees to make decisions based on other criteria than the ones documented in advance.

Fit organizational goals and policies

The fifth dimension referred to the idea that decisions during recruitment and selection processes should fit organizational goals and policies.

Decisions do meet organization goals and policies

Regarding the policies, it became clear that all the respondents had to deal with a few components in the policy which influence the recruitment and selection process. According to the respondents the policy described the minimal level of education and the number of years of work experience. All respondents had to deal with policies whereby higher professional education was required and some respondents were only allowed to recruit new employees with scientific education. The number of years of work experience depended on the work

environment of the respondent. Some organizations consciously decided to ask for less work experience since they claimed to be an organization with only young professionals. However, most organizations did ask for more work experience, in all cases this was included in the policy. According to the recruiters, in most cases they strictly adhered these policies. When respondents were asked their opinion about these policies it was striking to see the difference between respondents involved in internal recruitment and respondents involved in recruitment for external companies. Respondents involved in internal recruitment were really clear on the importance to stick to these policies during the recruitment and selection process since some organizations really advertise with these characteristics. Some organizations claim to only work with scientific educated employees within the whole organizations and therefore cannot deviate from these policies.

On the other hand, the respondents involved with the recruitment for external companies showed a different opinion when asked about deviation from these policies:

“Yes, sometimes I have difficulties with that, you already exclude a lot in principle. And uhm I often try to point on that in the beginning of the procedure, like if you all would like to have that you should know that this can be the consequences. It may take longer to recruit. It may just be that what you’ve got in mind is undoable”. - Respondent 9.

This quote exemplifies that this respondent does not always agree on policies of clients. Other respondents involved by the recruitment for external organization also mentioned that they try to discuss these issues with organizations. Sometimes this helps, and organizations do agree on the argument that a certain position does not necessarily needs to be filled by someone with scientific education.

Regarding transparency, deviation from policies can influence the transparency for applicants. Applicants know beforehand if they can apply or not, if they are aware of the fact that organizations only hire scientifically educated employees. It is not fair for the applicants who did not apply because of this criterion, when the organization eventually does not adhere to this policy. On the other hand, deviation from policies also gives the opportunity to hire someone that may not fit the criteria but is known by someone and therefore an exception is made, so someone out of the network is chosen (Bozionelos, 2005). Since many selection committees show a lack of diversity (often more than 90% of people in selection committees are white men) (Barres, 2006), selecting applicants out of the network can possibly lead to hiring a male applicant in a lot of cases.

Besides the policies of organizations, respondents mentioned that organizations do have goals regarding the recruitment and selection process. Those goals were mainly focused on ensuring that organizations hired the right staff in the future, when new employees are needed. However, these goals were not focused on gender issues. One of the respondents described this as follows when asking if there are any organizational goals or policies regarding recruitment and selection:

“Organizations are much more focused on a little tactical and strategic personnel planning. And from there on much more like, how can we ensure that we have the rights staff in the future? That is more a goal than to get 50 people this year and 26 women and age must be ranged between 25 to 50”. – Respondent 1.

This shows that this organization does have goals regarding their own personnel planning to ensure good organizational results in the future and not to contribute to the social debate of gender inequality. Again, a conflict for SCR seems to be the case. For organizations profitability is the main goal instead of social issues such as gender inequality. There was only one respondent who had to deal with organizational goals regarding gender equality within the organization. This respondent did mention there was an unequal distribution in their organization within management position and that the organization did set any goals to change this:

“Plus two more in training. That is something I saw in the strategic monthly update last Friday. But I did not know this. But it does show that we are working on it. And we also just hired two new women. Hmm, one as a manager of the internal team. (...) And one woman who is kind of joining the founders.” – Respondent 3.

In this quote, it is shown that the organization where this respondent works, does have some goals regarding recruitment and selection of females in management position. However, it is striking to see that she was not aware of these goals until she figured it out herself instead of being informed about it. Which could be perceived as unusual when she is responsible for the recruitment and selection process of the organization. This could imply that this organization does have goals, but did not (yet) take any actions to achieve that goal.

When asking the respondents if there is any change needed concerning goals and policies about gender distribution, most respondents do not see the added value of a policy or

any goals regarding recruitment and selection processes. Besides the current goals to grow with the organization. One of the respondents shares this opinion because he thinks it is the job of the recruiters to keep this in mind instead of putting it into a policy our goal: “*Yes, it is in the back of my head. (...) No, I think it is fine that there is no policy on it. But now it is with me. And I make these considerations. But when I leave, which will happen soon, then it is another story*” (Respondent 6). So even though the respondent is aware of the fact that he has the knowledge and experience, although it is not captured in a policy, they do not see the urgency to do something about this.

It can be concluded that decisions during recruitment and selection process do fit the organizational goals and policies regarding recruitment and selection process. However, in the context of this research it is important to mention that these policies and goals do not include anything about the issue of gender inequality in management positions. Only one out of the eleven respondents did note something about a policy about gender in the organization, however the respondent was not aware of this goal. Most respondents did not feel any need to make policies or goals regarding gender distribution within management positions.

Conflicts

The last dimension that has been analyzed in this research is the dimension about conflicts. In this dimension, two different kinds of conflicts were described. The first conflict is about how organizations deal with applicants that do fit the criteria but the organization prefers someone else, or the other way around. The second conflict that has been focused on is the conflicts between decisions that have been made and organizations policies and goals.

Conflicts with a prior criterion

The problem of respondents dealing with an applicant that fits the criteria but someone else is preferred, was a problem that was not recognized by the respondents. According to the respondents involved by the recruitment for external organizations it sometimes happened that clients came with extra criteria at the end of the process, which resulted in the rejection of other applicants. The following quote shows that this respondent does not agree with this kind of extra criteria afterwards: “*Yes, but also, when you do not set things with each other a prior, then uhm yes we would like to have someone that uhm I do not know, speaks fluently French. Yes, you should have said that a prior*” (Respondent 1). This quote shows that this respondent does not agree with such behavior at the end of the recruitment and selection process. According to multiple respondents, this was something that not happened on a frequent basis.

Respondents indicated they did not agree on such requests afterwards. When HR professionals do not agree on such request the transparency of the recruitment and selection processes can possibly increase. Because applicants are not surprised with rejections based on criteria they were not aware of before they applied.

Conflicts with organizational goals and policies

The last indicator was focused on conflicts between decisions made and organizations policies and goals. In the previous dimension it had been discussed that organization do make some goals regarding the amount of new employees that need to be hired. Respondents mentioned that in some cases conflicts arise when they do not manage to hire a new employee before a certain date. However, these are not relevant conflicts in the field of this research. Since organizations did not have any goals or policies regarding gender, no conflicts in this field were mentioned by the respondents.

Overall, it can be said that in some cases clients do reject applicants that fit prior determined criteria. This is mostly due to clients creating extra criteria at the end of the process. Respondents deal with these conflicts by not agreeing on these kinds of extra request, since all criteria have been discussed previously. This can contribute to the transparency of the recruitment and selection process, especially in favor of the applicant. However, it should be mentioned that respondents claim that this does not happen on a regular basis. Regarding the conflicts between decisions and policies/goals, it become clear that respondents do not feel there are any conflicts. Important to note here is that none of the respondents needed to work with goals or policies regarding gender issues.

Discussion, conclusion, limitations and recommendations

Discussion

The point of departure for this study was to contribute to the theory about transparency during recruitment and selection processes. Indirectly this will also contribute to the theoretical discussion how gender inequality can be reached, since transparency is seen as something that can contribute to gender equality (Van den Brink et al., 2010). By doing this, a comprehensive overview of different phases within the recruitment and selection process of management positions have been developed. Within these phases, different insights have been found. In the following paragraph this comprehensive overview, including interesting findings related to gender and transparency, will be provided.

Applying the results to the recruitment and selection process

The first step of the recruitment and selection process was, for all HR professionals, writing the vacancy. The results showed that HR professionals try to contribute to transparency by clearly describing criteria in advance. HR professionals considered hard criteria more easily to describe than soft criteria. Analysis of the websites and vacancies also made clear that hard criteria were indeed more easily traceable in vacancies than soft criteria. These findings are in line with the findings of Gibb (2014) that soft skills are more difficult to conceptualize than hard skills. These findings indicate that the hard criteria contribute differently to (the lack of) transparency during recruitment and selection processes than the soft criteria, since they are more difficult to predetermine. It was claimed that soft criteria were often based on gut feelings and therefore difficult to describe in a vacancy. This indicated that soft criteria remain unclear for applicants and therefore soft criteria negatively influence the transparency. The findings of the current study possibly influence gender inequality. Bozionelos (2005) described that committees have the tendency to choose applicants that fit to their own background. Essed (2004) described this as ‘cultural clones’: “lookalikes representing more of the same images and values” (p. 114). Because of these preferences for cultural clones, class ceiling affect are maintained (Essed, 2004). This study indicates that soft criteria and gut feelings do give the opportunity to more easily select the cultural clones, and therefore more easily male applicants.

As a second step, all organizations started the first selection round based on the CVs of applicants. In this selection round, decisions were made based on hard criteria. Respondents acknowledged that decisions based on hard criteria were more easily to communicate to

applicants than decisions based on soft criteria. However, the way of rejecting during this second step of the recruitment and selection process showed differences among organizations. Some organizations consciously decided to give personal feedback to each applicant since they considered this really important, even though this costs a lot of time and money. This implies that organizations give feedback in this way because of intrinsic motivations for transparency. Intrinsic motivations assure that organizations do things because they really think it is the right thing to do (Nybakk, & Panwar, 2015). On the other hand, some organizations acknowledged that after this first selection round, rejections are provided by standard emails, even though they claim that they consider transparency as important. This way of rejection was chosen because it took less time and money. This way of rejecting is in line with instrumental motivations (Nybakk, & Panwar, 2015). When organizations show instrumental motivations, this means that they act in a way that is good for the business. So in this case, organizations claim that transparency is an important topic because this is good for the business. In reality, organization profit is more important. These findings indicate that the kind of motivation does influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. When organizations want to be transparent because they think this is the right way to do, they most likely choose for transparency, even if this cost some extra time and money. Respondents who made clear that they want to be transparent because they feel pressure from society, deviate from transparency when they encountered conflicts with organizations profits. These findings are interesting since in advance it was not found that kind of motivation for transparency influences the actual transparency of the recruitment and selection process.

All organizations made use of online systems in order to capture information about why certain selection decisions have been made. Respondents did see the added value of these systems for both organizations and applicants. One striking finding was that in some cases respondents did not spend a lot of time reporting information because this was not the most interesting part of their job. Respondents made clear that in some cases, the lack of motivation to report information affects the quality of information about the selection decision towards the applicant. So in this study we learned that the motivation of respondents to report information, can influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. Such indications were not found in the literature on transparency, but this study does contribute to the existing literature by stating that motivation of respondents to report information can influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process.

After the selection of applicants on their CVs, the third step in the recruitment and selection process was the job interview. During job interviews, conversations with different

applicants were held. Results made clear that during these interviews HR professionals took little action to contribute to transparency. Only one organization claimed that they ensured structure during these job interviews. This was in order to make sure that argumentation about decisions could be given. Results showed that, after these interviews, a lot of decisions were made based on 'gut feelings'. Gut feelings may give selection committees the possibility to prefer applicants who fit their own power network or people with a similar background (Bozionelos, 2005). Van den Brink et al. (2010) showed that applicants will benefit from a more transparent recruitment and selection process because than gender bias is likely to occur. When decisions are based on gut feelings, this will cause less transparent recruitment and selection processes and can therefore lead to gender bias.

Besides, decisions based on gut feelings also gives the risk that Ryan et al. (2013) describe as 'Think Manager-Think Male'. This theory made clear that it does happen that management characteristics are automatically associated with men. This study towards transparency, made clear that when processes are less structured, decisions are more often based on gut feelings. In the field of gender studies, this is an important finding since decisions based on gut feelings, can influence the preference for male applicants because gut feelings can automatically relate some management characteristics to male applicants.

Even though respondents did acknowledge that gut feelings often cause lack of transparency by decisions, they considered this to be normal. These decisions based on 'gut feelings' causes that in multiple cases HR professionals made clear that they could not be honest towards applicants about reasons for decisions. HR professionals even questioned if it was always necessary to be honest towards applicants. In this research it became clear that respondents questioned the necessary to be honest because of fear for negative visualization in social media. These findings contribute to the theory of Qualman (2010) who described that social media transforms the way we live and do business. Qaulman (2010) argues that organizational success will be partly owed to its success within social media. The findings in this study are not only in line with this theory, it even shows that social media also influence the way organizations communicate towards their applicants. Besides, it shows that respondents feel that organizational success is partly owed to its success with social media however, organizational failure can also be owed by social media failure. This is an interesting finding since the research of Qaulman (2010) only mentioned the possible positive effects of social media, and the way this influences how organizations act.

After the job interviews, different steps were taken in the fourth phase of the recruitment and selection process. Some organizations chose for assessment tests, other

organizations chose another round of job interviews. However, in both cases, it was striking that all respondents acknowledged that in this phase deviation from the processes often occurs. These results show that required speed within recruitment and selection processes also influences the transparency of the recruitment and selection processes. On the one hand, it became clear that HR professionals get feedback from applicants that in some cases processes are taking way too long, which causes uncertainty for applicants. On the other hand, these results also indicate that acceleration of the process can influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process too. The finding that time in which a decision has been made can also decrease the transparency of the recruitment and selection process, is something that was not found in the literature. It was only suggested that the process should be predetermined, so this finding expands this theory about transparency during recruitment and selection processes.

Reflecting on measuring transparency

It is important to question how feasible it is to create total transparent recruitment and selection processes. In order to contribute to gender equality, it would be ideal if the whole recruitment and selection process would be transparent since it is assumed that transparent recruitment and selection process contribute to gender equality. However, the results made clear that this is not realistic in all cases. According to Van den Brink et al. (2010): “This is not to say that transparency should not be pursued, but this study has made it painfully clear that some elements in the process of recruitment and selection are almost impossible to formalize or make transparent” (P. 1478). According to the integrated model in this research, it would be best if applicants get personalized and honest feedback. But as a lot of respondents mentioned, in some cases this is undoable when a lot of people apply. And to what extent can you say that the transparency is increased when all applicants get personalized feedback? Because as shown, this personalized feedback can also consist hidden information. So this makes clear that it is really difficult to say when something is really transparent and when it is not. Even though organizations try to make sure that the process is transparent and decisions are transparent, decisions can include hidden information.

In this research it also became clear that there are much more aspects that influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. For example, the results revealed that motivation to report information was something that influenced the transparency. Motivation to perform a job seems to be something that is separate from transparency, but this research indicated that it can influence transparency. Other things that were found were

motivations behind transparency, possible negative effects in social media and speed of the recruitment and selection process. All these aspects seem to influence transparency in their own way and in order to reach full transparency it is not enough to only say we are going to ensure that processes are predetermined and decisions are standardized, because this study shows that other aspects do affect transparency as well.

Conclusion

The central aim of this study was to contribute to the theory about the transparency of recruitment and selection processes. To contribute to this theory, research according to the transparency of recruitment and selection processes of management positions have been done. Indirectly, these findings can also contribute to the theoretical discussion about how gender inequality can be reached. Hardly any studies provided empirical evidence on how recruitment and selection processes can become more transparent. In order to reach the research aim, the following research question was formulated: *“How do HR managers, recruiters and headhunters contribute to transparency during recruitment and selection processes for management positions?”*

In this study a theoretical framework for the transparency of recruitment and selection processes has been developed in order to answer the research question. Since no specific framework or theory about the transparency of the recruitment and selection process was found, the development of this framework enabled to specifically study the transparency of the recruitment and selection process. In contrast to the theory of Drew (2013) about general decision transparency, transparency in this study was not only focused on decision transparency, but also on process transparency. Results of this study showed that these processes can also contribute to (the lack of) transparency during recruitment and selection processes because in multiple cases, it became clear that organizations deviate from the recruitment and selection process. So this research confirmed that the process is indeed an important aspect of the transparency of the recruitment and selection and therefore a valuable addition to the integrated model and the literature about transparency of recruitment and selection process.

The second addition that was made by the integrated model was the expansion of the dimension ‘conflicts’ that was based on the model of Wall (1996). In the theory of Wall (1996) only conflicts between organizations and citizens were discussed. In the integrated model it was decided that conflicts within the organizations should be taken into account too, since it was assumed that these conflicts can also influence the transparency of the

recruitment and selection process. The results showed that some of the respondents do experience conflicts with criteria that have been determined in advance, which can influence the recruitment and selection process. Since the results showed that in some cases such conflicts do influence the recruitment and selection process, the expansion of the dimension seems to be a good contribution to the framework.

Answering the research question showed that HR professionals claim that transparency is an important issue during the recruitment and selection process of management positions since they experience pressure from society to be transparent. In order to contribute to transparency, respondents claim that they describe processes in advance and decisions are made standardized and formalized. However, in practice it became clear that organizations do not always adhere to transparency. In this study it was shown that there are different aspects that do influence transparency. In the study of Van den Brink et al. (2010) it already became clear that due to privacy reasons there is 'bounded transparency'. This study adds to this that indeed there is bounded transparency, but more aspects do influence this. Findings in this research indicate that motivation to report information, the motivation for transparency (intrinsic/instrumental) and the possibility for negative visualization in social media are all aspects that can influence transparency in recruitment and selection processes.

Besides the contribution to the literature on transparency, this study also contributes to gender inequality studies. In this study it was assumed that transparency during recruitment and selection processes would contribute to gender equality in organizations, yet, little evidence was given to substantiate this argument. In this research one aspect that can influence gender inequality was found. This aspect started with the finding that in advance respondents experience difficulties with describing soft criteria. Due to respondents, this was because soft criteria are more based on gut feelings and these gut feelings make it more likely that selection committees select someone that fits their personal background. It also gives the opportunity for 'Think Manager-Think Male'. Whereby gut feelings could give the preference to a male applicant because in some cases management characteristics automatically linked to males. So the main finding regarding gender in this research is the indication that soft criteria are more likely to contribute to gender inequality than hard criteria.

Limitations

A first limitation in this research focusses on the integrated model that has been developed. During the research it became clear that within dimensions some repetition was found. This ensured that during the process, some changes were made in order to avoid repetition. During

interviews it appeared that in some cases more explanation was required. To avoid uncertainties and repetition in further research, it would be useful to test this model with help of quantitative research. Testing the model can confirm that this model is a good representation for the concept of transparency during recruitment and selection processes.

Discussing the limitation of the methodology of this research is appropriate since the entire qualitative research is conducted by one researcher. The coding and analysis has been completed by one researcher. This effects the reliability of the research since analysis is based on the interpretation of only one researcher. It could be possible that another researcher would have interpreted the same data in a different way.

A third limitation for this research is that the results of this thesis are hard to generalize because of the small sample size used within this research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Due to the small sample size it is difficult to say that results are representative for the whole population. However, this research is a valuable first step in getting insight in the transparency of the recruitment and selection process for management positions.

Practical recommendations

Based on the overall results, it can be stated that there are still significant areas for improvement regarding transparency of the recruitment and selection process of management positions. Based on this research, practical recommendations are strongly focused on HR professionals. The most practical recommendation is based on the result that showed that in some cases HR professionals still agree on discrimination regarding gender. The advice for HR professionals is to not agree on any request regarding sex preference. HR professionals continue to support this form of discrimination by asking clients for their preference for a sex. This can possibility maintain the problem of gender inequality, because organizations do get space to give sex preference. Instead of agreeing on such request, HR professionals should help organizations to become aware of the advantages of a diverse workplace. This awareness should not only be gained in HR departments but within the whole organizations. As mentioned before, gender inequality does not only exist due to a lack of transparency during the recruitment and selection processes. Therefore, awareness should not only focus on the transparency of the recruitment and selection process in order to increase gender inequality. Organizations should be aware that gender inequality is a bigger issue that comes back in different mechanisms within organizations.

The other practical recommendation is more focused on increasing the transparency of the recruitment and selection processes. Even though the lack of transparency during recruitment and selection processes is not the only cause of gender inequality, this research made clear that there is space for improvement in this area. In some cases, improvement can be reached by small changes. For example, putting the predetermined process, standardized and formalized decisions points on their website. According to the most respondents, processes were predetermined, so the only action that has to be taken is ensuring that potential applicants do get access to this information before they apply. Some changes will take more time. For example, the possibility for applicants to directly receive and request information. Even though applicants do have the possibility to call for more explanation, these standardized mails do offer space for improvement. When these standardized letters make room for more personalized, applicants have more information about why a certain decision has been made, especially regarding their own application. However, the research made clear that in some cases the quality of reported information was less due to a lack of motivation. In order to ensure good quality of reported information, organizations need to ensure that employees are motivated to do their job, even if this is not the most fun part of their job. Without good quality of reporting information, it will be difficult to give personal and honest feedback towards applicants.

However, what is important in these adjustments to create more transparency is that organizations are intrinsically motivated to be transparent. Results showed that instrumental motivations can lead to a decrease in transparency. Therefore, it is really important that organizations decide why they want to be transparent, and are aware of the advantages. When transparency is only chosen because organizations feel pressure and therefore think it is good for business, transparency will finally suffer from the preference for organizational profit.

Recommendations for further research

As aforementioned, the results of this research are hard to generalize due the relatively small sample size. Future research could focus on generalizing the results of this research by quantitative research. First of all, quantitative research gives the opportunity to test the integrated model for transparency during the recruitment and selection process. When a quantitative study will be designed, it would be possible to test if the right dimensions and indicators have been used. Besides, it could also be tested if other dimensions and indicators should be added. The influence of motivation to report information, the influence of intrinsic and instrumental motivation and possible negative effects of social media on transparency can

be tested. This is interesting since this research indicated that these factors influence the transparency of the recruitment and selection model, and can possibly added as moderator or mediator. Thereafter, quantitative research could test whether the contributions of HR professionals to transparency are applicable to a larger sample by means of a survey.

As mentioned above, transparency during recruitment and selection processes will not solve the entire problem of gender inequality. Many more mechanisms do exist that contribute to gender inequalities such as training, management development, communication and working conditions (Merens et al., 2015). To gain more insight in such measures in the overall field of gender inequality, future research should focus on other mechanisms. Due to the number of researchers involved within this research study, including all mechanisms would have been too extensive. However, for further research it would be encouraged to focus on another mechanism since this can contribute to theoretical discussion of gender inequality.

Another recommendation for further research is based on the fact that the recruitment and selection of the board of directors is not included. HR professionals made clear that they are not included in the recruitment and selection processes for these functions. However, the transparency of the recruitment and selection process for the board of directors would be an interesting topic for further research, since gender inequality seems to be an even bigger issue here as well (Van den Brink et al., 2016). Only 14 percent of the board of directors does exist of at least 30 percent female (Van den Brink et al., 2016). During the interviews it became clear that it often remains unclear for HR managers and recruiters how the board of directors is selected.

A last recommendation for further research would be to focus more on relationship between transparency and gender inequality. In this research it was assumed that more transparency would contribute to gender equality. Even though this research did found some implications for this, hard evidence is not found. Therefore, in further research it would be valuable to explore if there is more evidence for this relation.

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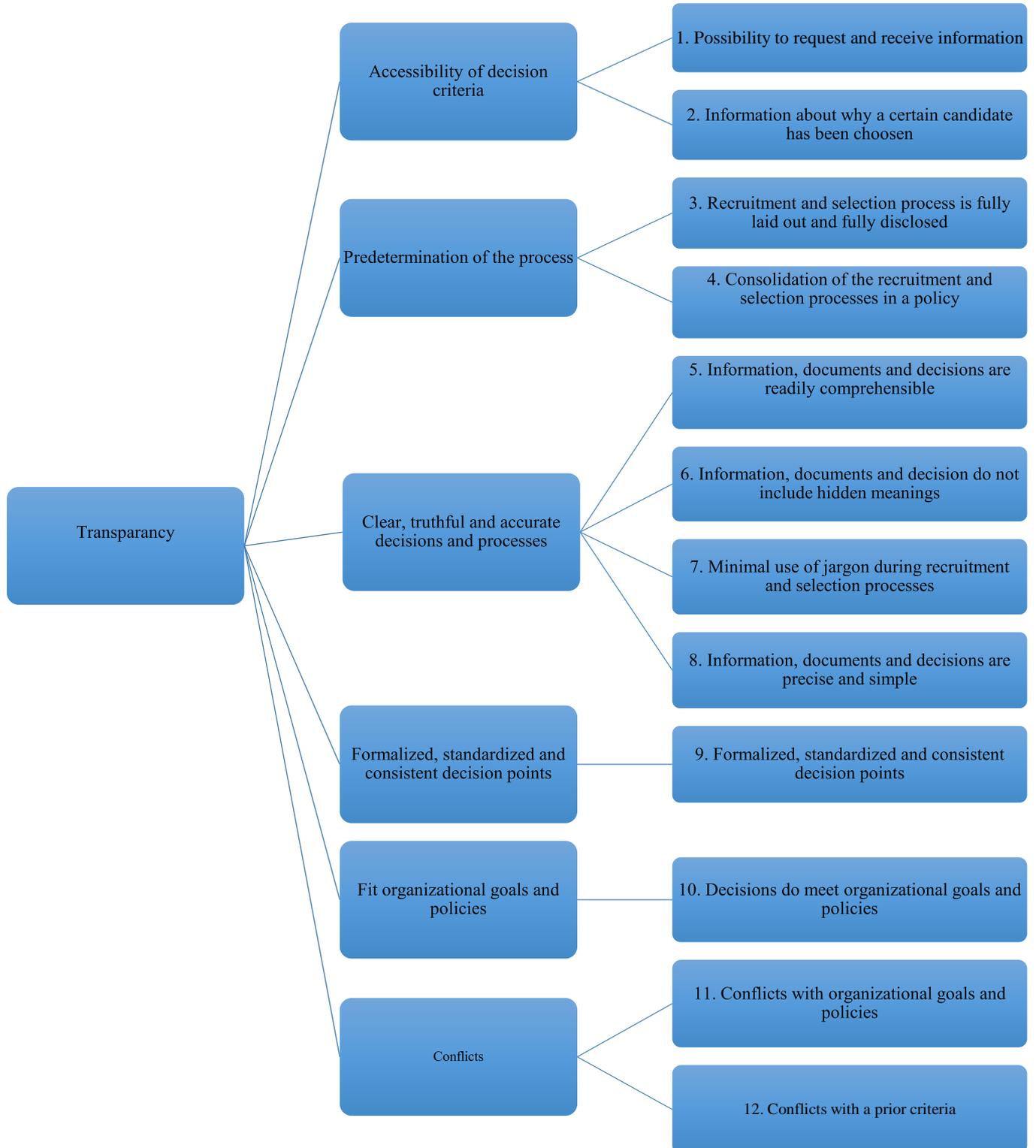
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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Integrated model including specific criteria



Appendix 2 – Interview guide

Introductie

BLOK 0

Goedemorgen/ goedemiddag,

Alvast hartelijke bedankt dat u wil meewerken aan mijn interview. Ik ben Renate Klaassen en volg de Master Strategic Human Resource Management aan de Radboud Universiteit te Nijmegen. Voor mijn afstudeeropdracht doe ik onderzoek naar de transparantie van werving- en selectieprocedures. Ik onderzoek op wat voor een manier(en) HR-managers, recruiters en andere betrokkenen bij werving en selectie aankijken tegen transparantie tijdens werving- en selectieprocessen en hieraan bijdragen. In mijn onderzoek gaat het om de werving en selectieprocedure voor hoge posities binnen organisaties. Voor het interview is het van belang dat u antwoorden geeft vanuit u eigen ervaringen bij de werving- en selectieprocedure voor management posities, hierbij is er uiteraard geen goed of fout antwoord.

Het interview duurt maximaal één uur, en met uw toestemming zou ik het interview graag op willen nemen. Na het afnemen van het interview zal ik deze uitwerken en op basis van de interviews resultaten formuleren. Er zal vertrouwelijk omgegaan worden met de data en rapportages zullen niet te herleiden zijn naar personen. De resultaten zullen niet openbaar gemaakt worden aan andere partijen dan de Radboud Universiteit en eventueel uzelf.

Ik ben benieuwd naar uw visie op transparantie tijdens werving- en selectieprocedures. Als eerst heb ik een aantal algemene vragen. Vervolgens zal ik meer in gaan op transparantie tijdens werving- en selectieprocessen.

Algemene deel

BLOK 1 – Algemeen respondent

- Kunt u kort iets vertellen over het verloop van de werving- en selectieprocedure (voor eerste en tweede laag managementposities) zoals u gewend bent?
 - o BV. Uit welke stappen bestaat de procedure? Wordt er een commissie samengesteld? Wie nemen deel aan deze procedure? Hoe lang duurt deze procedure? Hoe is de man/vrouw verhouding binnen deze commissies tijdens deze procedure?
 - o Hoe worden kandidaten geworven? Gebeurt dit via informele netwerken?
- Kunt u kort iets vertellen over uw rol bij werving en selectieprocedures?
 - o Bv. Waar is medewerker bij betrokken? Brievenselectie, interviews, opstellen van de vacature of schrijven van het beleid.

Transparantie

BLOK 2 – *Accessibility of decision criteria*

- Kunt u iets vertellen over in hoeverre er tijdens werving- en selectieprocessen wordt vastgelegd op basis van welke criteria een kandidaat geselecteerd wordt?
 - o Worden deze criteria ook al in de vacature benoemd?
 - o Hoe kijkt u aan tegen deze (niet) opgestelde criteria?
 - Zou er vooraf meer vastgelegd moeten worden of juist minder (waarom)?
 - In welke mate heeft u de indruk dat dit bijdraagt aan een transparante werving- en selectieprocedure?
 - Doet u hier zelf iets aan om dit te veranderen?
- Kunt u iets vertellen over de mate waarin beslissingen die tijdens de werving- en selectieprocessen gemaakt worden achteraf terug te zien zijn (bv in geschreven documenten)?
 - o Is dit ook inzichtelijk voor kandidaten?
 - o Vindt u het belangrijk dat dit goed gebeurt?
 - o Hoe draagt u binnen uw functie hieraan bij?

BLOK 3 – *Predetermination of the process*

- Kunt u iets vertellen over in hoeverre een werving- en selectieproces van tevoren wordt beschreven en vastgelegd in documenten?
 - o Worden kandidaten ingelicht over de procedure?
 - o Wordt het beschreven document ook extern gecommuniceerd naar stakeholders?
 - o Hoe vindt u dat dit op deze manier wordt gedaan? (Voor interviewer: Draagt dit bij aan transparantie?)
- Kunt u iets vertellen over de mate waarop er van bepaalde procedures kan worden afgeweken?
 - o Moet hier bv. toestemming voor gevraagd worden?

BLOK 4 – *Clear, truthful and accurate decisions and processes*

- Kunt u iets vertellen over hoe er over het algemeen naar kandidaten teruggekoppeld wordt over waarom zij wel of niet geselecteerd zijn?
 - o In hoeverre heeft u de indruk dat dit altijd op een eerlijke manier wordt teruggekoppeld vanuit de organisatie(s)?
 - o Wat is uw rol hierin?
 - o Is er op dit gebied volgens u verandering nodig?
- In hoeverre moet u binnen de organisatie de uitkomst van een werving- en selectieprocedure verantwoorden?
- In hoeverre heeft u de indruk dat er tijdens werving- en selectieprocessen weleens gebruik wordt gemaakt van vakjargon die ervoor zorgt dat informatie niet altijd duidelijk is voor alle betrokkenen? (Tijdens gehele procedure, begint al bij plaatsing vacature)
 - o Ervaart u dat zelf weleens als belemmering in het werving- en selectieproces?

BLOK 5 – *Logic and rational decision point*

- Kunt u iets vertellen over in hoeverre beslissingspunten binnen de werving en selectieprocedure op voorhand worden vastgelegd? (Beslissingspunten = besluit waarom een bepaalde kandidaat wel of niet geselecteerd wordt voor een volgende ronde)
 - o Heeft u de indruk dat deze beslissingspunten ook daadwerkelijk worden gehanteerd?

- Kunt u iets vertellen over in hoeverre u het zelf van belang vindt dat er vooraf bepaalde beslissingspunten worden vastgelegd?

BLOK 6 – *Fits organizational goals policies*

- Kunt u iets vertellen over of er binnen organisaties doelen worden gesteld wat betreft aannamebeleid? Inzien ja:
 - In hoeverre heeft u de indruk dat er bij werving- en selecties procedures rekening gehouden worden met organisatiedoelen wat betreft het aannamebeleid? Bv. een bepaald percentage vrouwen/mannen, afkomst of leeftijd.
 - Hoe ervaart u de invloed van beleid op de werving- en selectieprocessen? (Vindt u dit goed of juist niet?)

BLOK 7– *Conflicts*

- Kunt u iets vertellen over hoe u omgaat met conflicten tijdens werving- en selectieprocedures? (Kunnen conflicten tussen wervingscommissie zijn of conflicten met beleid).
 - Bijvoorbeeld wanneer procedures niet overeenkomen met vooraf gestelde criteria.
 - Of wanneer selectieprocessen niet overeenkomen met de organisatiedoelen of organisatiebeleid.
 - Wat is uw rol wanneer dit soort conflicten ontstaan tijdens werving- en selectieprocedures? (Zijn hier bepaalde uitgangspunten die worden gehanteerd?)

Tot slot zijn er nog enkele vragen die ik u graag zou willen stellen. Deze vragen zijn meer specifiek gericht op de man/vrouw verdeling binnen organisaties.

BLOK 8 – Gender equality

- Kunt u iets vertellen over in hoeverre u zelf de indruk heeft of er nog sprake is van een scheve man/vrouw verdeling op de arbeidsmarkt (specifiek managementposities)?
- Kunt u iets vertellen over of u tijdens werving- en selectieprocedures weleens te maken heeft met criteria of omstandigheden die de voorkeur voor een bepaald geslacht beïnvloeden?

- Heeft u verder persoonlijk nog verhalen/opmerkingen/mededelingen met betrekking tot gender ongelijkheid die u de afgelopen jaren zijn opgevallen tijdens werving- en selectieprocedures?

Dan heb ik als laatste vraag nog of u misschien nog enkele vacatures heeft die ik in zou mogen zien?

Dan wil ik u hartelijke bedanken voor het gesprek. Als u interesse heeft in de uitkomst van het onderzoek, dan stuur ik u deze graag toe.