

**GendeResearchIreland welcomes Professor of Diversity Uduak Archibong to UCC! 15<sup>th</sup>  
November 2019**

**Introductory words from Dr Monica O'Mullane at the Institutionalising Gender Equality seminar,  
at the Creative Zone, UCC, Cork, Ireland**

My esteemed colleagues and dear friends, I warmly welcome you to today's discussion on the topic of institutionalising gender equality in higher education. The discussion will be led and facilitated by my good friend and highly regarded and respected Professor of Diversity of the University of Bradford, Udy Archibong.

Udy was lead coordinator of the EC funded GENOVATE project, in which UCC was a partner. A project no doubt well known to you in how it advocated for institutional change through the implementation of a contextualised Gender Equality Action Plan. Today Udy will draw on her experience as Professor of Diversity of the Centre for Inclusion and Diversity at the University of Bradford, where she provides strategic oversight for equality and diversity across the institution. Udy will share her thoughts on Athena SWAN as a means of achieving gender equality, as well as other avenues addressing gender inequality in higher education.

I had the pleasure of meeting and working with Udy and others on the GENOVATE project consortium while I worked for a time as scientific coordinator of the Slovak GENOVATE partner team. Inspired and motivated by the unrelenting and tenacious work of my GENOVATE colleagues I applied for and was successful in attaining the EC Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship on this topic of the institutionalisation of gender equality, specifically exploring the institutional responses to, and process of, Athena SWAN in Irish higher education institutions. My project, GendeResearchIreland, is being hosted within ISS21 in UCC for four years, alongside my very supportive mentor Dr Cairtriona Ní Laoire. I am in the middle of data collection and whilst I have not conducted formal analysis yet, I would like to share two reflections with you today.

Firstly, the overwhelming sense of 'happy talk' as referred to in Sara Ahmed's seminal book 'On Being Included' has been startling to me, in a way. The institutional talk or statement that 'everything is fine here' in relation to gender equality, is a interesting finding in itself, and one I can thankfully explore over the next three years, throughout rounds of interviews I will conduct. I look forward to sharing that with you at a later date.

I hope to explore and uncover the role that the informal processes in the institutionalisation of gender equality, the role and the existence of the hidden life of institutions, as Louise Chappell and Georgina Waylen refer to, have to play in the extent and approach of this institutionalisation.

A second reflection from my data collection I'd like to share is the power of change that can happen within the Athena SWAN process. I am aware of the imperfections of the process of Athena SWAN. It is undeniably a product of neoliberalisation as Tzanakou and Pearce have concluded from their study. The unrestrained greed and short termism inherent in neoliberalism, as highlighted by our inspirational President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins at the intergenerational conference on climate justice a few days ago in Cork, is part of our social legacy. Nevertheless, Athena SWAN has huge and boundless potential for action on gender inequality, through its formal process and action plan.

I would like to finish by paraphrasing Margaret Atwood, 'It's not gender equality change, it's everything change.'

There will be no gender equality or gender diversity without a change in our attitudes, values and lives. It starts with us, individually and collectively, in changing the way we view and live our lives with a deep sense of justice and meaningful purpose.

Without further ado, let me welcome to the podium my dear friend Udy.