

easyJet - This is Generation Gender Gap



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1. INTRODUCTION

According to the new law in the UK, all private companies, voluntary organisations and public sector bodies with 250 or more employees are to report their gender pay gap to the Government Equalities Office on an early basis (Topping & Barr 2018). The first deadline to report for private companies and voluntary sector was set by 4 April 2018. The public bodies were due to report by 30 March this year (*ibid.*).

The Gender Pay Gap report consists of six obligatory calculations (Acas 2018):

1. *Average gender pay gap as a mean average.*
2. *Average gender pay gap as a median average.*
3. *Average bonus gender pay gap as a mean average.*
4. *Average bonus gender pay gap as a median average.*
5. *Proportion of males receiving a bonus payment and proportion of females receiving a bonus payment.*
6. *Proportion of males and females when divided into four groups ordered from lowest to highest pay.*

Employers are encouraged (however, not required) to supplement their calculations with a narrative (Acas 2018). The narrative allows companies to explain the reasons for the results as well as provide any details on how the gender pay gap is planned to be reduced and eventually eliminated.

The gender pay gap reports will be publicly available to anyone interested, which includes companies' own employees, customers and potential recruits (*ibid.*). The data, however, is not going to be fact-checked, as well as companies with wide gender pay gaps are not going to be legally punished (Topping & Barr 2018). Instead, UK government made a promise to "publish sector-specific league tables, highlighting companies failing to address pay differences between men and women" (*ibid.*). The aim of such publicity is to encourage pressure and scrutiny towards organizations with high gender pay gaps from the side of media, competitors and employees. Hopes are, that this will force companies to take more drastic actions to reduce the gender inequality present within organizations (*ibid.*).

This case represents a strong example of different actors trying to achieve social change, namely fighting for gender rights and equality on the workplace. Social, and even environmental sustainability is not possible without ensuring that half of the worlds population can exercise their human rights. To solve such wicked problem as climate change we must mobilize the full potential of all its citizens, despite their gender. Ensuring that

women get equal career opportunities and equal pay with men is not only a question of justice, it is a vital step towards sustainable development. In the following paper, five representatives involved in the question around the gender pay gap will be presented including how they interrelate. Subsequently, their influence in the discussion will be analysed focusing on their possibility to drive positive or negative change.

2. ACTORS

2.1 Amber Rudd, Minister for Women and Equalities

Amber Rudd is the the Minister for Women and Equalities and as such has the responsibility for policies on women and sexual orientation and transgender equality, as well as is responsible for cross-government equality strategy and legislation (GOV.UK, n.d.). The main point of significance in terms of the gender pay gap, is that Amber Rudd was the Minister for Women and Equalities as the requirement to report on the gender pay gap was initiated. A statement from Rudd on the day of deadline for reporting included saying that reporting gender pay gap data was the first step in reaching a more gender equal working environment, as well as pointing out how closing the gender pay gap makes sense from an economic perspective. She also mentioned actions that the government already was taking in order to close the pay gap, the measures involving parental leave and making it easier to return to work after caring for a child, as well as, for example, reviewing recruitment processes in order to ensure a diverse workforce (Home Office News Team, 2018). She also addressed the fact that what is most important is what employers later do with the data and how they deal with the gaps that may be, and that the reporting is an opportunity for breaking down the barriers that obstruct women's advancement in the workplace (Wight, 2018).

2.2 Johan Lundgren, CEO of EasyJet

easyJet's first report based on the UK's new gender pay reporting requirements, showed a large discrepancy between the genders (Megaw & Rutter Pooley, 2018; Topham, 2018). The average male salary was 51.7% higher than the average female employee while the median pay gap between male and female UK employees was reported to be 45.5% (e.g, EasyJet, 2017; Topham, 2018).

easyJet claims that the pay gap between the genders was strongly influenced by having a predominantly male pilot community, whom receive higher salaries relative to other employees. Only 6% of easyJet's highly paid pilot community are female. According to easyJet, recruiting female pilots is challenging due to a "deep seated view in society that being a pilot is a male job" (Topham, 2018).

As part of addressing this pay gap, easyJet claims that they are seeking to encourage women to become pilots through its Amy Johnson initiative. The airline has set a target that 20% of new pilot recruits should be female by 2020, with the airline's new chief executive, Johan Lundgren, wanting to go further (E.g., Kollwe, 2018; Topham, 2018). Lundgren, who has stated an "absolute commitment" to equal pay between the genders, took a voluntary reduction of salary by £34,000 in order to match his female predecessor Carolyn McCall, as part of his "personal commitment" to equal pay for men and women (Musaddique, 2018).

2.3 Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary

Frances O'Grady is the first woman holding the position of the General Secretary of the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) (Wikipedia, 2018a). TUC is the national trade union centre, representing the majority of trade unions in the UK holding around 5.6 million members. Their mission "is to support trade unions to grow and thrive, and to stand up for everyone who works for a living. They campaign for more and better jobs, and a more equal, more prosperous country" (Wikipedia, 2018b). Frances O'Grady is campaigning for minimum wage, lifelong learning and gender equality. In her position as the secretary of TUC she publishes for example the women's pay day that highlights the huge pay gap in the UK (Wikipedia, 2018a).

Regarding their calculations, women work on average 67 days for free when compared to what their male colleagues earn (Jones, 2018). The pay gap is currently at 18.4% with the highest gap in the financial and insurance sector with 35.6%. Since the UK is having one of the worst gender pay gaps in Europe, there is a new law obliging companies with more than 250 employees to publish their salaries. Still, Frances O'Grady claims that the progress towards gender equality is too slow and supports the idea of the government putting more pressure on firms to close the gap (TUC, 2017). Especially, she says that, more than just

reporting about gender pay gaps, companies should be forced to explain how they will close the gap.

According to TUC, young women and women over the age of 50 are especially hit by the pay gap (Morrison, 2018). This reflects the impact of motherhood on women's earnings. Women having children have to face countless obstacles, as for instance the inability to progress their careers after having moved to a part-time job.

Furthermore, Frances highlights the need for higher wages in jobs that are predominantly done by women, such as childcare and social care while she claims that "even in industries where women dominate, like education, they get paid far less than men" (TUC, 2017). While this unequal payment is against the British law, high employment tribunal fees hamper women from accessing justice. Therefore, TUC (2017) is calling the government to take steps towards an equal treatment of men and women. In detail, they call the government to:

1. End discriminatory pay through equal pay audits, sanctions, and ending employment tribunal fees
2. Tackle the occupational segregation through good careers advice and removing discrimination and prejudice
3. Improve pay for "women's work" through valuing important jobs by increasing pay, progression, and status
4. Tackle motherhood pay penalty through tackling pregnancy discrimination, access to flexible work, creating more well-paid, high-skilled part-time jobs and giving dads better opportunities to take care of the children

2.4 Kasia Staszewska, Women's Rights Policy Advisor at ActionAid UK

Kasia Staszewska is a feminist activist, with over 10 years of experience working with gender equality and women's rights issues (Staszewska 2018). One of her most recent positions was Women's Rights Policy Advisor at ActionAid UK. Kasia's main responsibilities were "policy analysis, research and advocacy towards the UK Department for International Development", as well as, major transnational institutions, such as UN and EU (*ibid.*). The focus of her work was dedicated to such topics as women's economic inequality and violence against women.

Kasia, (in this particular case representing ActionAid UK), views the problem of the gender pay gap as a part of larger structural issue of global gender inequality (Staszewska 2015). The problem, according to Kasia (2015) is human-made and takes its roots in the prevalent societal system. In short, women's economic discrimination is "a direct consequence of policies, laws, systems and power structures" built upon sexist attitudes prevalent in all world's societies (Staszewska 2015, p.11).

Notably, gender discrimination at work is not only harmful for women alone, it negatively affects the businesses and state economies as well – states Staszewska (2015a). Ensuring and protecting women's rights at a workplace is not only a matter of economic efficiency and social sustainability, it is primarily a matter of justice. Women's work must be recognised, valued and rewarded fairly (*ibid.*).

The only way to achieve gender equality and eliminate gender pay gaps, according to Kasia and ActionAid, is through a transformational change of our systems of values and attitudes towards women's work (Staszewska 2015). It is a shared responsibility of national governments, international institutions and business sector to start and implement this change. Therefore, Kasia Staszewska urges UK Government and business sector "to address the prevailing forms of discrimination that women face" at the workplace (Staszewska 2015, p.15). UK Government must invest more resources to ensure the enforcement and compliance with the labour regulations, such as the gender gap report. The private sector, in its turn, must respect international and local laws which are aimed at securing gender equality in a workplace (*ibid.*).

2.5 Conservative male UK Government employee

A male UK Government employee will in many ways work in alignment with the Conservative party and represent its ideas and ideologies – the specific opinions and charges of each employee can, however, vary greatly. The Conservative party of the UK Government addresses the issue of the Gender Pay Gap in its manifesto and states that they "will take measures to close the gender pay gap" (Conservatives, 2017). Included in those efforts is the requirement for companies with more than 250 employees to publish data on their gender pay gap. The party states that they will "work for parity in the number of public appointments going to women" and "push for an increase in the number of women sitting on boards in

companies” (Conservatives, 2017). The measures through which these are intended to be achieved, however, are not explained. Another aspect of gender inequality raised in the Conservatives party manifesto of 2017 is the matter of parenthood and caring, and the manifesto described aims for improved take-up of shared parental leave and suggested that efforts would be made in order to help companies increase work flexibility that in turn could make it easier for mothers and fathers to share the responsibility of parenting – there are, however, no concrete steps for how this is going to be done. The manifesto also says that the Conservatives want to help parents and caregivers to return to work after times of absence, partially through supporting companies who take on these types of people (Conservatives, 2017).

2.6 Interdisciplinary; power relations; interrelation of actors

Amber Rudd is the Minister for Women and Equalities and is as such responsible for, among other things, policy on women. In *Ways of Social Change* (2012) it is demonstrated how policy can be effective in creating change. For instance, when a tax increase was placed on cigarettes, a drop in smoking rates could be identified as a result. As a minister, Rudd’s agency is in many ways extended to encompass that of the greater entity of the state, and as such she sits on more power than an ordinary individual – even though there are limitations to her political influence as well.

The TUC can be considered as a powerful agent of change since it unifies nearly all of the unions of the UK and, therefore, 6.5 million people (Wikipedia, 2018b). Unions are an empowering link between employees and employers, shown by key achievements such as the introduction of a national minimum wage or the equal pay act which makes it illegal to pay men and women differently (Wikipedia, 2018b). Through campaigning, such as the publication of the women’s pay day (TUC, 2017) and lobbying, they are in contact with policy-makers and can, accordingly, help to change national laws and improve the working conditions for women.

Johan Lundgren, through his high position in easyJet, has the power to directly change the policies of the company, by, for instance, introducing an employment quota. Even though he can, therefore, strive towards positive change, his actions are restricted by the economic system and powerful interests from other stakeholders. On the other hand, Massey

(2012) states that corporations are one of the most "powerful forces ever devised" (*Ways of Social Change*, p. 231) – the basis for this statement mainly involving the significant impact corporations have on people's everyday lives through influencing how people work, behave, view the world, etc.

Kasia Staszewska in her role as women's rights policy adviser at ActionAid is part of the civil society presenting a link between citizens and the State, therefore, having a similar role to that of the TUC. Since they do not have direct legislative power, their influence is quite restricted. However, their influence in campaigning against discriminatory practices in the UK should not be underestimated.

3. THEORIES

3.1 How Change Happens - Empowerment

Rights-based approaches, capabilities and empowering women are three strands of development thinking which center around the idea of empowerment (Krznaric, 2007).

The rights-based approach implies a degree of social mobilization and government accountability to citizens. This approach to development consists of two elements, the first of which being a top-down legalistic approach that stresses the incorporation of international human-rights conventions into national law. The second element is aimed at, on a local level, having people informed of and empowerment to exercise their rights that can be claimed from the state (Krznaric, 2007).

The capabilities approach advocates empowering individuals to live a life they value by giving them opportunities to strengthen and expand their capabilities to do so. Living a life of value (e.g., by having self-respect) is subjective as individuals may value different things and wish to pursue different goals (Krznaric, 2007). Ensuring that women have the ability to make strategic life choices where this ability was previously denied (e.g., through access resources) has become one of the key goals of development interventions; the empowerment of women (Krznaric, 2007).

Amber Rudd's impact could be analyzed through several strands of development thinking. Rudd's responsibility for policies on women and sexual orientation and transgender equality, as well as cross-government equality strategy and legislation shows an effort for a top-down rights-based approach as well as an effort of empowering female individuals to

exercise their right to equal and fair treatment. Rudd's work and voice for equality may go a long way in expanding women's capabilities to live a life of value, through arguments that highlight that women are equal. Such a voice may also be effective in removing any systematic or even psychological barriers for women to have the ability to make strategic life choices.

Johan Lundgren's outspoken commitment to equal pay between genders and easyJet's Amy Johnson initiative to encourage more female pilots may result in strengthened and expanded capabilities for women wanting to pursue the perceived masculine profession that is pilot.

Frances O'Grady and the TUC aim to empower those who are working, no matter the gender. Pressure on the government to implement equality measures and the TUC key achievements of national minimum wage and the equal pay act shows a top-down legalistic approach. This important influence and decision making is likely resulting in expanded capabilities for women to live a life they value and increased ability to make strategic life choices.

Kasia Staszewska claim that achieving gender equality is through systematic change of values and attitudes toward women's work hold clear connections to all the above mentioned strands of development thinking related to empowerment.

The employment tribunal fee introduced by the Conservatives was a clear example of disempowering women as it disabled many workers that had been discriminated against to pursue legal action. While now deemed unconstitutional, the Conservatives claims to want to work for parity in the number of public appointments going to women and push for an increase in the number of women sitting on company boards signals an empowerment approach to development.

3.2 Three Spheres of Transformation

In the paper "Responding to Climate Change: The Three Spheres of Transformation" (2013) by Karen O'Brien and Linda Sygna, the three spheres of transformation - practical, political, and personal - are used to explain how transformation can happen. It is important to consider that the spheres are embedded in each other and operate together. The practical sphere includes behaviours and technical solutions and are the measurable dimension. In the gender

pay gap discussion, examples for this could be a gender quota indicating how many women and men are employed or the gendered salary gaps for the same jobs. These are measurable and practical and decided upon by the State. This sphere is, therefore, influenced by representatives of the State, such as Amber Rudd, but also Johan Lundgren in employing more women.

However, changes in payment or quota are embedded in a larger sphere, the political sphere. This sphere depicts enabling and disabling conditions for change. It is economic, political, legal, social and cultural systems that shape the environment in which we are able to operate and create change. In the gender pay gap discussion, a legislation that creates better conditions for women could be found in this sphere. This can include the abolition of the tribunal fees that Frances O'Grady as a representative of TUC campaigns for. It could also include the creation of better systems for child care and better career options in part-time employments.

Changes made in the political sphere are based upon our belief system, the discourse we use, and the perspective that individuals and communities have on society and certain topics. These belong to the outer sphere, the personal sphere. Changes in this sphere involve a reframing of the topic and are considered to be the most powerful because it changes the way in which we define problems (political sphere) and find solutions (practical sphere). In the gender pay gap discussion, Kasia Staszewska can be considered to campaign within this sphere. Working for ActionAid, her goal is to empower women and to change the perspective we have on women and men. Changes in this sphere can include our view on the role of motherhood and parental leave, but also career perspectives for girls. Education is an important feature of this sphere.

4. BEST & WORST CASE SCENARIOS

During the upcoming fictitious meeting our characters are going to discuss these questions:

- a. How the problem of wide pay gaps (which got revealed after the Gender Pay Gap report deadline) between men and women in the UK should be addressed.
- b. Whether these suggested measures should be voluntary or mandatory.
- c. Which role the state should play in this issue.

An example of measures to combat the wide gender pay gap our characters might suggest can be a compulsory gender quota for the company boards. Such proposal may well come from the UK Minister for Women and Equalities Amber Rudd, since under her reign the gender pay gap report policy was initiated.

When it comes to the easyJet's CEO Johan Lundgren, his proclaimed "absolute commitment" to the equal pay between male and female employees and the fact that the airline has already set a target of 20% new female recruits by 2020, signals that he might well be for such quota. However, as a businessman, he most likely will argue for voluntary, not mandatory rule. Many businesses face difficulties of recruiting female employees simply because of the shortage of qualified women for the "traditionally male" professions. In case of mandatory gender quotas most of the companies would face a dilemma between hiring less qualified personnel, and by that risking the future success of their business, or eventually breaking the law and facing legal prosecution. Therefore, it is in the best interests of all CEOs not to allow any mandatory gender quotas. An alternative measure to help eliminate the large gender pay gap suggested by Johan Lundgren might be special educational programmes and marketing campaigns for women to attract them into the more "male" professions, such as jet piloting. Such programmes could be fully or partially financed and administered by the UK government.

The position of Frances O'Grady, the General Secretary of TUC, regarding compulsory gender quotas is hardest to guess, since as a workers' union leader she must protect the interests of both men and women. On one hand, as it is previously stated in this paper, she is a very eager opponent of gender equality herself and TUC has a big number of requirements to the government such as introduction of equal pay audits and sanctions to companies with wide gender pay gaps. Therefore, she might support the law on mandatory gender quotas. On the other hand, such gender quotas are often criticized as discriminative, and therefore might prevent a more highly qualified male employee to get the deserved position, while a less qualified woman taking the place just because of her gender. Since Frances' position requires her to ensure the interests of all the members of the union, she might instead argue for the voluntary form of gender quotas instead. Regarding the Johan Lundgren's possible proposition of women's educational programmes, we find TUC having a big interest and resources to join and implement the initiative.

Analysing the position of Kasia Staszewska, as a gender equality activist, her inferred position towards the compulsory gender quotas can be positive. However, she might well argue, that introduction of any type of gender quotas is a discriminatory gesture towards women itself, since it portrays women as less capable. Moreover, it might cause a situation, where most women in the boards will be seen as just “tokens”, which does not in essence improve the attitudes towards women in high positions. Therefore, Kasia might oppose the gender quota measure suggested by Amber Rudd, but support Frances O’Grady in such mandatory measures as equal pay audits.

The Conservative party male member might argue that compulsory gender quotas might affect the performance of businesses negatively, as well as de-motivate new companies to establish their headquarters in the UK, which will negatively affect the economy of the state. Therefore, he might agree with the voluntary quotas only. When it comes to the educational programmes, he might argue that it is a great idea as such, however, government does not have budget for this. Therefore, it is up to the workers’ unions, NGOs and business sector to finance any special courses for women. On the other hand, he might well support the idea, and promise, that government will lead the initiative with the help of the previously mentioned societal stakeholders.

When it comes to the role of the state in combating gender discrimination we predict all of our actors to agree that state has the primary responsibility and power to address the problem. This assumption is based on the positions of each of the characters provided above in this paper. We do leave space for possible exceptions, although.

Analysing everything written above, we do conclude, that our best case scenario would be if all the actors agreed upon the voluntary gender quotas, as well as would commonly support the initiative of the educational programs and pledge their financial and human resources to implementation of such initiatives. The worst case scenario would be if actors divided into smaller “camps” each opposing each other, and therefore no particular agreement would be possible to reach. However, all of our characters seem to be pro-feminist in one or another way, so we do expect the best case scenario to take place.

5. CONCLUSION

This report provided an analysis of the five different societal actors and their stands regarding the gender pay gap situation in the UK. Two theories of social change process were used to

look at the power relations between these actors and identify which one of them has stronger potential to produce the desired social change. In short, the representatives of the state (Amber Rudd and the male Conservative party member) work especially in the practical sphere with measurable changes, while Frances O'Grady works in the practical, but also in the political frame trying to push the boundaries to change the circumstances of women's labour, such as lobbying for better childcare laws. Kasia Staszewska by working with empowerment and stating that systems of values and attitudes towards women's work must be changed is operating in the personal sphere trying to change the discourse / understanding of women's work through influencing politics of states. As a result, her influence could be the most effective since it has potential to trigger actual long-lasting change. At the same time, being a representative of civil society, she alone has a limited amount of influence, which is not enough to radically change the system. Therefore other societal stakeholders, such as business leaders like Johan Lundgren who have resources and power to influence both the government and the civil society are essential in the fight for gender equality.

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