Chocolate, Cheese and Gender Equality?

*How Switzerland’s national culture influences the implementation of gender equality policies in companies*
Abstract

Gender equality is one of the most topical issues of all. Many researchers around the world are addressing the issue of equal opportunities in the labour market and are looking for ways to ensure this in all sectors of the economy. This paper addresses this issue and aims to gain a deep understanding of the influence of a national culture on the implementation of gender equality policies within companies. With the help of a qualitative research method, the various factors of culture were examined and their relationship to the gender-specific understanding of a society analysed. The findings show the effects on companies operating in Switzerland and combine the experience of case companies with the literature already available. In order to test and further explore this combination, the authors of the thesis opted for an abductive research approach to repeatedly expand understanding with new literature and develop a more relevant comprehension of the influence of culture. The entire literature research finally created a framework that shows the links between the various theories and provides a clear overview of the background. With the help of selected case companies, important insights could be gained and with this empirical data, a detailed analysis for a better understanding of the influence of cultures on the implementation of gender equality policies could be achieved. These findings, combined with the existing theory and theoretical synthesis, provide a clear analysis and finally provide the reader with an insight into the implications, recommendations and limitations as well as suggestions for further research.

Culture has a major influence on the implementation of gender equality policies. This paper shows how the various companies in Switzerland approach this influence and how Swedish companies with business operations in Switzerland in particular are pushing ahead with the implementation of policies for equality between women and men. This can give companies in Switzerland an indication of how they have to deal with cultural conditions within a country and how they can make optimum use of these for their human resource management.

Keywords

Gender equality, Switzerland, national culture, policy, implementation, Sweden
Acknowledgments

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1 Background

In this first chapter, the relevance of the selected topic is explained in a first step and the background is illuminated. Afterwards, the theoretical problems and the existing research are explained in the problem discussion. In a further step, the problem is examined in practical application and why the topic is of concern in the real world. At the end of the first chapter, the research question is mentioned, moreover, the purpose and the limits of the study will be presented.

1.1 Introduction

Gender inequality nowadays affects various organisations such as the World Economic Forum (hereinafter referred to as WEF), the United Nations and the governments of various countries. Although great efforts and measures have been taken to combat gender inequality in nations around the world, the level of gender equality varies between different countries and companies (Kamrany & Robinson, 2012). A large gender discrimination has many negative effects on a society or a country. About half the population in most countries consists of men and the other half of women. It can therefore be devastating for a society if half of the population has no political rights and thus cannot influence the development of a country (Inglehart, et al., 2002). However, this was the case for a long time, since the right to vote for women was not introduced in many countries until the course of the 20th century. With the introduction of the right to vote for women, traditions and norms were broken and a change took place (ibid). In another study, Caprioli (2005) examined the effects of high gender inequality in a country on its stability. He found something remarkable: The higher the gender inequality in a country, the higher the probability of internal conflict in that country. In other words, countries where cultures of gender discrimination and structural hierarchies prevail are saturated with the potential for violence that makes internal conflicts in the state more likely (ibid). In addition to the results of Inglehart, Norris and Welzel (2002) and the Caprioli study of 2005, gender discrimination has direct consequences for a country’s economy, as gender inequality prevents an economy from reaching its maximum productivity potential and thus constitutes an obstacle to economic growth. Despite this level of knowledge, it is still the case that many women earn less than their male colleagues, usually get stuck in lower to middle management positions and thus seem to be a glass ceiling (Kamrany & Robinson, 2012). Furthermore, there are indications in some countries that women have less access to higher education. However, it is important to know that women make up half of the world’s population, as has already been mentioned. These restrictions lead to productivity losses of up to 25% in some countries (ibid). It is therefore clear, as mentioned above, that gender discrimination harms countries, businesses and society in general. Measuring gender inequalities in companies in different countries over several years is important and can be used to compare exactly these companies in different countries and to identify opportunities for improvement in general employment conditions. The WEF with the Global Gender Gap Report (2015) and the United Nations with the Gender Inequality
Index (2017), for example, publish such gender equality indices. Both the index and the report use different indicators to measure gender inequality, which inevitably leads to different rankings. Nevertheless, the rankings provide a good overview of the international discrepancies regarding gender inequality at country and company level.

Nevertheless, high gender equality at country level does not mean that companies consistently live and implement gender equality. Dickens (1998) found that gender equality in companies appears more rhetorical in human resource management models than it is actually implemented. A survey by McKinsey in 2017 shows something similar. Of the US companies surveyed, 70% said they were committed to promoting gender equality and that measures are being taken. However, less than a third of the employees of the companies surveyed see management’s commitment to promoting gender equality (Barton & Yee, 2017). There seems to be a gap between existing policies and their implementation in day-to-day business.

However, all the studies and surveys described above concerned several countries or only the USA. A comparison of two culturally very close countries that are of great economic importance is very interesting in this area. The Scandinavian country Sweden and the alpine country Switzerland are known for their quality and excellent service, which is appreciated worldwide. Both countries pursue equality policies at the legislative level (Borchorst & Siim, 2008; Die Bundesversammlung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, 2017). Moreover, they have a significant difference in the treatment of the genders in companies. In Switzerland, the principle of equality between men and women was only incorporated into the Federal Constitution in 1971 (Eidgenössische Kommission für Frauenfragen EKF, n.d.). For comparison: the Swedish law as early as 1921 (Martinek, 2006). In 1996, a law was passed in Switzerland prohibiting discrimination based on gender in gainful employment (Federal Statistical Office, 2018). In Sweden such efforts were already mentioned in the 1960s and banned by law: “Jämställdhet” is the Swedish word for equality, which gained more and more importance in the post-war period (Martinek, 2006). It verges on an affront to mention that the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden did not introduce the right to vote for women until 1990 due to a court ruling (Eidgenössische Kommission für Frauenfragen EKF, n.d.).

The historically determined young phase of gender equality in Switzerland continues to present many companies with the challenge of adapting and pursuing their policies to current legal standards. Moreover, innovations from countries that are more advanced in gender equality than Switzerland are often difficult to promote due to socio-political obstacles (Schöchli, 2014). The existing discrimination, which must be used with caution as a word and must be explicitly checked depending on the data set, can only partly be traced back to human capitalist or workplace-specific characteristics. The theoretical definition of discrimination is often difficult to distinguish from justified conditions. The question of how to deal with the two genders, which only arise later in a company, is multifaceted. The political situation
influences the individual behaviour of every citizen and increases or hinders the future-oriented thinking of employees in Switzerland (Gornick & Meyers, 2004). In return, however, this political environment is once again shaped by the values and norms of a society (Orloff, 2009).

Nevertheless, Switzerland has regularly performed very well in the already mentioned equality ranking in recent years. In the WEF’s Global Gender Gap Report 2017 (World Economic Forum, 2017), Switzerland occupies the 21st place, and the late implementation of gender equality policy in politics and its good position in gender rankings appear almost contradictory. These cannot only be occupational or human capitalist characteristics, which is why the prescribed laws and generally applicable social standards have not yet found a foothold in corporate policy (Schmid, 2016). Thus, there is an interest that compares the differences between the social norms, the equality policy of companies in Switzerland and their effective implementation in the company. The international aspect is particularly interesting here: Are there differences between Swiss companies and Swedish companies with subsidiaries in Switzerland? The authors examine in detail the influence of existing cultural differences. There are many theoretical approaches on how these can be measured and assessed. Geert Hofstede’s theory is currently the most detailed one, including social norms. In addition, the theory has availability for the present work on the most suitable researches of organizational culture (Hansen, 2011). Referring to the third cultural dimension of Hofstede Insights (2018), the two attributes of Masculinity and Femininity are so pronounced that male cultures are more oriented towards material gains, high-performance expectations and assertiveness (the strongest can win). Female cultures, on the other hand, are more relationship- and cooperation-oriented. In a country comparison between Sweden and Switzerland, the northern country has a Masculinity value of five and Switzerland a pronounced male culture with 70 points (Hofstede Insights, 2018). Haas and Hwang (2007) show that it is difficult for women to reconcile work and family life and that it is, therefore, necessary that men are accepted in their right to an active father role and receive the same support for it. The other dimensions also play a central role in a society and flow into the decisions of management members.

1.2 Problem discussion
1.2.1 The scientific problem

After researching in the field of gender equality it has been found that some research has already been conducted on topics such as gender inequality, gender gaps and gender glass ceiling. It should be emphasised, however, that research to date has mainly been carried out in the field of family life, politics or education. In their book, Mason and Jenson (1995) for example explore whether the increase in female employment has led to higher divorce rates or whether the changes in families have a negative impact on children (Mason & Jenson, 1995). In addition, it is often investigated how work in the family household is divided between men and women (Huber & Spitze, 1983; Pleck, 1985). Baxter (1997) took a slightly different
approach by examining the participation of the genders in the household on a transnational basis.

Research into gender equality in politics has also been going on for decades. However, the results of the research sound always very similar. As early as the middle of the 20th century, researchers reported that women were not sufficiently represented in politics (Duverger, 1955; Kirkpatrick, 1974). In some countries, such as Sweden, Rwanda and Argentina, major steps have already been taken towards gender equality (Paxton, et al., 2007). For example, Sweden and Rwanda are regularly in the top ten in the WEF’s Global Gender Gap Report (WEF Global Gap Report, 2017). However, according to UN Women, only small steps towards gender equality in politics have been taken in the last few years when looking at the world. Only 22.8% of all national parliamentarians were women in 2016, an increase of only 11.3% compared to 1995 (UN Women, 2017). It is therefore important to know why there are gender inequalities at all.

In recent decades it has become clear that a country’s culture can be both an enabler and a driver in development. In some cultures, there are acts that clearly discriminate against women, such as forced marriage or domestic violence (UNESCO, 2014). Culture has an impact on the perception of anti-women acts such as sexual harassment. Luthar and Luthar (2007) have shown in their essay that sexual harassment is at least in part due to cultural behaviour. Therefore, culture has to do with gender equality in countries. Hofstede’s Model (2001) or the GLOBE Model (House, et al., 2004) study the different cultures and try to make the culture of nations measurable on the basis of different criteria. Yeganeh and May (2011) examined in their paper how cultural values affect the gender gap. It was discovered that culture continues to have a major impact on the gender gap, especially the value conservatism has a particularly high negative influence on the gender gap (Yeganeh & May, 2011). Furthermore, research conducted by Eagly, Makhijani and Klonsky (1992) has shown that people perceive autocratic behaviour of women more negatively than the autocratic behaviour of men. As a result, women in management positions are automatically confronted with problems more quickly, even though they cannot be blamed at all (Eagly, et al. 1992). Moreover, religion has to do with culture and was for a long time a source that women were inferior. That is why religion has long served to keep women out of social and political life (Paxton, et al., 2007). It can thus be seen that various scholars have already investigated whether and how closely culture and gender inequality are related (Bolzendalh & Myers, 2004; Hardford, 2005).

The thesis authors have nevertheless noticed that few articles are very current and that rather little specifically referred to Switzerland and Sweden. In addition, it was recognised that, as already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, little research is available at company level. However, Briscoe, Schuler and Tarique (2012) examined the importance of policies in international human resources and how they should be implemented in multinational companies in order to gain an advantage
over the competition. Other researches were almost impossible to find about analyses of gender equality policies and their implementation in companies. The WEF Global Gender Gap Report (2017) shows that Sweden has better gender equality than Switzerland. However, compared to the six cultural dimensions of Hofstede, the cultures of the two countries are, with a few exceptions, very similar.

These facts have prompted the authors of the thesis to question what companies operating in Switzerland do to improve the gender equality and what the national culture has to do with it. That is why this thesis will examine the influence of the national culture of Switzerland on the gender equality policies and their implementation from the perspective of Swiss companies and Swedish companies doing business in Switzerland. Furthermore, with this study, the authors want to contribute into cross-country research in internationalisation and in particular gender equality matters.

1.2.2 The managerial problem

Sweden is a textbook example when it comes to gender equality. It has seen itself as a champion in gender equality since the 1990s (Towns, 2002) and various research has already been carried out to investigate gender equality in Sweden (Haas & Hwang, 1995; Haas & Hwang, 2007). Schmid (2016) and Epple, Gasser, Kersten, Nollert and Schief (2015) investigate the career choice of women and the effect of parenthood on their later development in employment. Example countries such as Sweden, which show that masculine hegemony, must be reduced for better implementation of gender equality and that fathers must receive more formal support from companies in order to increase their responsiveness (Haas & Hwang, 2007). Such a reduction has already taken place in Sweden compared to Switzerland.

The same applies to Switzerland, where some research on gender equality has already been carried out (Granato & Schittenhelm, 2001; Haeberlin, Indorf, & Kronig, 2005; Schmid, 2016). It seems that in practice, many full-time jobs cannot be converted or only to part-time jobs to a limited extent. Furthermore, women with their employment wishes often have to submit a dismissal and/or receive the dismissal of the company after the end of maternity leave or have to reckon with massive restrictions (Giusto, 2017). In contrast to women, working men in Switzerland have to struggle with the fact that the legal basis for paternity leave is missing and that companies have to hope for the goodwill of the companies. This means that they currently only have the hours and days off usual for family events at their disposal. In particular, there is a large discrepancy here for companies from countries that have the option of paternity or parental leave (Schmid, 2016).

The practical result of this thesis should provide managers in companies with an understanding of the interplay between Swiss national culture and gender equality. Moreover, the authors want to contribute to a better understanding of Swiss national culture among international companies with activities in Switzerland. Future
decision-makers in Swiss as well as international companies should also be made aware of which measures are of particularly importance so that gender equality policies can be successfully implemented in day-to-day business in the future.

1.3 Research questions

After the explanations in the problem discussion, the following research question was posed by the authors:

How does Switzerland’s national culture influence the implementation of gender equality policies within domestic companies and companies internationalising in Switzerland?

1.4 Purpose

The aim of this work is to gain an understanding of Swiss national culture and to understand it as a phenomenon that influences companies in Switzerland in the implementation of their gender equality policies. This dissertation will examine the influence of this phenomenon in an exploratory nature and thus analyse the organizational process of gender equality measures within Swiss companies and compare it with Swedish companies operating in Switzerland. Furthermore, it is to provide recommendations for companies in Switzerland in order to achieve utmost equality between men and women, regardless of the influence of national culture.

1.5 Delimitations

This study will focus only on the effects of inequalities of opportunity between female and male employees within Swiss companies and Swedish companies that have become internationalised in Switzerland. The authors will deliberately omit further genders and concentrate only on the differences between men and women.
1.6 Outline

**Chapter 1**
- **Introduction**
  The introduction consists of a background of the chosen topic. After the introduction, the theoretical and managerial problem is explained in the problem discussion and the research gap and the purpose are pointed out. The chapter is then finalized by the delimitations and the outline of the study.

**Chapter 2**
- **Literature review**
  The second chapter presents the theory necessary to analyze the empirical data of chapter three. Furthermore, at the end of this chapter a theoretical synthesis is presented based on the theories of this second chapter.

**Chapter 3**
- **Methodology**
  This chapter presents the choice and motives of the methodologies which will be used for the empirical data collection in the further course of chapter four.

**Chapter 4**
- **Empirical findings**
  In this part of the thesis the findings of the empirical data collection are presented to the reader.

**Chapter 5**
- **Analysis**
  For chapter five, the authors of this thesis will incorporate the presented theory, the empirical findings and their own voice into the analysis in order to link the empirical findings with the theoretical framework.

**Chapter 6**
- **Conclusion**
  In the last chapter of this thesis the authors will answer the research question and make recommendations with the help of the preceding chapters. In addition, the limitations of the study will be presented and areas for future research will be identified.
The second chapter presents the theoretical framework on which this thesis is based. First, culture in general and culture of nations, in particular, are dealt with. The concept of international human resource management is then presented and afterwards it is defined what gender equality means and what it needs to advance it in a company. At the end of the second chapter, a theoretical synthesis is created, which visualizes the influence of the various theories on the research question.

2.1 National culture

There are many different definitions of culture in literature. One that is often cited is the definition of Schein (2004), which says that culture is a group of shared values that is recognized in the structures and actions of people. Since culture consists of several elements, one can conceive of culture as an iceberg (Schmiedel et al., 2010). There are the invisible elements, the so-called underlying assumptions, which for example contain ideologies, feelings, beliefs and values (Schein, 2004). The visible elements of the culture iceberg are concrete actions or structures, such as behaviour (Schmiedel et al., 2010). These can be expressed as symbols and reflect the deep values and norms of a society (Hofstede et al., 2010). There are two different types of culture, on the one hand, the national culture and on the other hand the organizational culture (Hofstede et al., 2010; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012) which differ in their influence on society. Organizational culture is similar to national culture, but on a smaller scale and therefore has the following characteristics: It is holistic, historically shaped, socially constructed, soft, connected to anthropologic concepts and hard to change (Hofstede et al., 1990). According to Gerhart (2008), organizational culture is mirrored or restricted by national culture, depending on the perspective. For example, a culture of nations has a much greater influence on people than an organizational culture of a company (vom Brocke et al., 2011). Although a foreign company can bring its own culture to a country and live it within the company (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004), the national culture will nevertheless have an influence on the behaviour of employees. The fact that corporate culture is sometimes clashes against national culture can be illustrated with US or UK based companies with subsidiaries abroad. Many try to fill senior management positions actively with women. Even in countries where due to different cultural norms this would not be foreseen (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004), so in such cases, corporate culture is put above national culture. However, this thesis deals with national culture, as it can be better measured. But even national culture can be measured in different ways, there is not the one right method. The two best-known models for measuring national culture are the Hofstede Model and the GLOBE Model (Shi & Wang, 2011). In their article, Shi and Wang (2011) examined which of the two models is better suited for cross-cultural research. The researchers conclude that although the two models are relatively similar, there are also some major differences and these differences may well lead to different results in the course of an investigation. While the GLOBE study is one of the latest studies in cultural research (Chhokar et al., 2007), the
Hofstede model is already somewhat older. According to Shi and Wang (2011), the GLOBE study has so far been less criticized in the literature. However, this may have something to do with the fact that it is younger than the Hofstede study and has therefore not yet been completely analysed and tested (Shi & Wang, 2011). It is also mentioned in the article that there is no doubt that both researches are of great value. However, since Hofstede’s work was pioneering and the GLOBE study was strongly influenced by Hofstede’s work (Shi & Wang, 2011), the six dimensions model according to Hofstede are applied in the further course of this thesis on the comparison of national culture.

2.1.1 National culture according to Hofstede

Geert Hofstede discovered during his work at IBM that despite the existing corporate culture, there are great cultural differences between employees in the various countries and regions. That is why he has examined the existing differences in thinking and social action between IBM employees from over 50 modern nations. The paper-and-pencil survey was conducted twice, once around 1968 and the second time around 1972, resulting in over 116,000 questionnaires that were analysed. The questionnaires have been evaluated and expanded over the years to include additional professional groups and regions (Shi & Wang, 2011).

Hofstede published his first cultural dimension model in 1980 and characterized a country’s national culture in four dimensions: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity and uncertainty avoidance. Since then, these four dimensions have been widely used in research (Gallén & Peraita, 2017) and in 2001 Hofstede added the dimension long-term vs. short-term orientation and in 2010 indulgence vs. restraint. These six dimensions are evaluated by Hofstede on a scale from zero to 100 for each country. Zero means a minimal extent of the dimension and 100 means a maximum extent. All six dimensions represent independent preferences that make it possible to distinguish countries. Hofstede also notes that culture can only be used effectively if it is compared (Hofstede Insights, 2018). On the following page, the six dimensions are briefly explained and described, what is measured with it, according to Hofstede.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance (PDI)</td>
<td>Expresses the extent to which members of society accept or even expect power to be unequally distributed. The fundamental question, therefore, is how society deals with inequalities. In companies with a high power distance, hierarchies are accepted where everyone finds his place. Conversely, societies with a low PDI try to divide power and demand justification for unequal distribution of power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)</td>
<td>Countries with a high IDV value are described as individualistic and countries with a low value as collectivistic. Individualistic countries prefer a social framework where it is expected that people only care both for themselves and for direct family members. Collective countries, on the other hand, prefer a tightly-knit framework in society and define themselves as “we”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS)</td>
<td>This dimension expresses whether a society is motivated more by male or female values. Masculinity stands for values such as heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success and means that a society is more competitive. Femininity, on the other hand, stands for cooperation, caring for the weak and quality of life. This society is much more consensus-oriented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)</td>
<td>This dimension expresses whether a society is motivated more by male or female values. Masculinity stands for values such as heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success and means that a society is more competitive. Femininity, on the other hand, stands for cooperation, caring for the weak and quality of life. This society is much more consensus-oriented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term Orientation vs. Short Term Orientation (LTO)</td>
<td>Societies with a low LTO score prefer to preserve time-honoured traditions and norms and are more critical of societal change. However, companies with a high LTO score are more pragmatic. They support change as a way to prepare for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indulgence vs. Restraint (IND)</td>
<td>A society that lives indulgence can celebrate success much more easily and it is allowed to enjoy life and have fun. Restrained societies try to suppress such things with strict social norms and are therefore more conservative and reserved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Six Dimensions according to Hofstede Insights (2018)*
2.1.2 Switzerland compared to Sweden

In order to compare the two countries Switzerland and Sweden on the basis of the six cultural dimensions according to Hofstede et al. (2010), the online country comparison tool from Hofstede Insights (2018) is used. Figure 1 shows that many dimensions are very similar in the two countries, however, there are also significant mismatches.

![Figure 1: Own figure with data gathered from Hofstede Insights (2018)]

**Power Distance**

In the field of Power Distance, Sweden has a low score of 31. This means that Sweden proclaims equal rights for all, one is independent and superiors are easily accessible to subordinates. Power is decentralised and communication is direct and everyone can participate. Switzerland also has a low score of 34. Society thinks that inequalities should be minimized and there is a culture of empowerment and facilitation (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

**Individualism**

With a score of 71, Sweden is to be regarded as an individualistic society. The Swedish society, therefore, prefers that only themselves and the immediate family members need to be cared for. Decisions such as promotions or hiring are made on the basis of merit. Once again, Switzerland scores similarly to Sweden in this dimension. Switzerland has a slightly lower preference for individualism with a score of 68, however, the values and standards here are comparable to those of Sweden (Hofstede Insights, 2018).
**Masculinity**

When it comes to Masculinity, Sweden scores extremely low with five. This means that Sweden can be considered a feminine society. Managers try to achieve consensus and society sees equality, solidarity and quality in working life as important. It is discussed extensively until unanimity is reached. There is the Swedish word “lagom”, which means not too much, not too little, not too noticeable, everything moderate. It ensures that everyone has enough and no one has too little. Switzerland, on the other hand, is clearly different from Sweden. With a score of 70, Switzerland is a masculine society. It is lived to work and conflicts are solved by fighting them out (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

**Uncertainty Avoidance**

With a score of 29, Sweden has a very low preference for avoiding uncertainty. This means that Swedish society has a relatively relaxed attitude and deviations from norms are more tolerated than in societies with a high score in this dimension. Swedish society is convinced that there should not be more regulations than are absolutely necessary and innovation is not seen as a threat. Switzerland also differs here from Sweden and scores significantly higher at 58. Swiss society prefers to maintain its beliefs and behaviour and is rather intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. Rules are needed from an emotional point of view, even if they are useless (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

**Long Term Orientation**

In the dimension of long term orientation, Sweden is relatively central at 53. Therefore, no clear preference of the Swedish society can be derived. Switzerland, by comparison, is clearly a pragmatic company with a score of 74, what means traditions can easily be adapted to new circumstances (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

**Indulgence**

Swedish culture is characterized by indulgence with a high score of 78. Society wants to enjoy life and is optimistic. Switzerland also has a culture of indulgence with a score of 66. The discrepancy to Sweden is minimal (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

2.2 (International) Human Resource Management

The objective of International Human Resource Management, according to Briscoe and Schuler (2004), is primarily to understand, study, apply and revise human resource activities that may occur in an internal and external context. All stakeholders must be involved, as they all have an influence on the processes in Human Resource Management (hereinafter referred to as HRM) (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004). HRM is of course also used to influence employee behaviour (Jackson & Schuler, 2003). This is because employee behaviour has an impact on profitability,
customer satisfaction and other vital metrics of effectiveness and is, therefore, an important strategic challenge for all companies (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004). Every company, large or small, has some kind of HRM activities. These activities include formal policies that govern how employees are managed. According to Becker, Huselid and Ulrich (2001), companies that systematically adapt their HRM policies and practices to the company are more successful than companies that do less. Another study examined how US subsidiaries of foreign multinational corporations adapt to local HRM practices (Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994). It was found that subsidiaries in the USA generally follow local practices. While these results cannot be extended to all other countries (Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994), it shows that companies are influenced by other practices or even cultures. This is also confirmed by the article by Laurent (1986). The author of the before mentioned article writes that for a long time management approaches developed in one culture were automatically considered applicable to any other culture and transferred to foreign cultures (Laurent, 1986). However, a comparative analysis of several national cultures has shown that there is no one correct management approach. Each country has developed its own culture through its development and history, which is incomparable and makes the management of organizations and their human resources unique (Laurent, 1986). Multinational organizations and their HRMs, in particular, are always confronted with strategic decisions aimed at optimizing the quality and effectiveness of their activities all over the world. According to Laurent (1986), in order to create a corporate image and identity, multinational companies must seek to bring consistency to the way employees are managed on a global basis. Dickens (1998) noted in her article that HRM, which has evolved over the years, further offers great potential for promoting gender equality and other equality in companies. Equal opportunities policies in companies were already described by Sisson (1994) as a key personnel policy for companies. It is therefore important to adopt an HRM approach that supports the development of employees and values them (Dickens, 1998). The role of the individual employee and the importance of involvement open the way for arguments for the appreciation of all people and thus makes it possible to combine the promotion of equality with the achievement of corporate goals (ibid).

2.3 Gender equality

In recent decades there has been a clear positive trend towards the development of gender equality. This evolution was favoured on the one hand by the development of third world countries and the continuous improvement of industrialised countries on the other hand (Quilha, 2016). Moreover, several gender equality actions have been initiated by international organisations. The “Decade for Women”, initiated by the United Nations, ended in 1985 and has produced thousands of women’s organisations throughout the initiative, enabling women to network worldwide (Meyer & Prugl, 1999). After this, all members of the United Nations agreed 1995 to the Beijing Platform for Action, which included a forward-thinking program for women’s rights (Rao, et al., 2016).
Furthermore, gender equality has become an important issue in many societies around the world. Not only because of philosophical and social reasons, but also for economic reasons (Quffa, 2016). Chichilnisky (2008) legitimately asked in her article why there is still gender inequality in today’s rational economy. There are several answers to this question from different researchers. For example, Chichilnisky (2008) herself mentions that the reason is primarily historical. In the past, women were mainly in the household, as men generally had higher salaries (Chichilnisky, 2008). In contrast, differences in ideological perceptions have a great influence. In many religions of the world, women are portrayed as inferior to men, which leads to discrimination against women being excluded from certain aspects such as social and political life (Paxton, et al., 2007). Bertrand and Hallock (2001), on the other hand, supposed that the lack of women in top corporate positions could also be due to a lack of long-term career commitment on the part of women.

Gender inequality in companies often results from discriminatory norms and practices, the unequal distribution of responsibility in the household and the way institutional structures consider and integrate gender (EIGE, 2018). The term gender gap is further used in the literature to describe the unequal outcome of women and men in the labour market (EIGE, 2018). Furthermore, Goldin (2008) also defines gender gap as the “systematic difference in outcomes” achieved by men and women in the labour market. The most important gender differences in the employment market relate to inequalities in employment rate, part-time work, unpaid care and family responsibilities, working conditions, hourly wages and access to rights and assets. Moreover, according to Bleijenbergh and Van Engen (2015), in literature there are mainly debates about whether gender equality interventions should primarily be devoted to the change of organizational structures or the representation of individuals in companies. However, although either actions companies take to promote gender equality in the workplace, these interventions are often unsuccessful (Bleijenbergh & Van Engen, 2015).

2.3.1 Social norms and structure

Social norms and deep structures have a strong influence on gender equality in companies. Standards are often invisible because they are considered normal (Rao, et al., 2016). They are also a part of the culture, which was explained in more detail in chapter 2.1 (page 8). In many countries of the world, the gender roles are taken for granted and neither questioned nor attempted to change, as it is a tradition. Organizations also have fixed social norms and structures. The “normal” process in the company can mean that both genders do not have the same opportunities since the processes have always been the same (Rao, et al., 2016). Meyerson and Tompkins (2007), for example, show how women are hindered from becoming professors at American universities. During the first five years, the professor must have an impressive list of research, otherwise, he or she may be asked to leave the university. During these intensive five years, Meyerson and Tompkins (2007) observed that women often have children and are therefore unable to conduct
intensive research. Norms and structures are primarily concerned with how ideologies, social norms and practices prescribe how fixed gender roles override gender equality laws (Rao, et al., 2016). Much research has been done in recent years on social norms and how they can be changed (Rao, et al., 2016). Studies by the World Bank (2012) or the Overseas Development Institute (2014) have shown that the change in norms is due to demographic change, education and access to the media.

2.3.2 Rules and policies

Companies in Switzerland must comply with the Equal Opportunities Act GEA law. It entered into force in 1996 and was introduced to promote equality between men and women. The law thus prohibits all forms of discrimination based on gender and is relevant to all employment relationships (Federal Office for Equality FOGE, 2017). The principle of non-discrimination applies in particular to the recruitment of staff, the allocation of tasks, working conditions, salaries, professional development, promotions and dismissals and sexual harassment. According to the Federal Office for Equality, gender equality was thus introduced on paper in Switzerland. However, the Federal Office writes in the same section that in practice there are still discrepancies between the target and actual situation. There is still discrimination within companies, which is mainly due to the traditional division of roles between men and women (Federal Office for Equality FOGE, 2017).

According to Rao, Sandler, Kelleher and Miller (2016), it is important to have policies and rules in place to promote gender equality in companies. In fact, many companies have implemented gender strategies in recent years, for example, which may include gender policies or family-friendly personnel policies. In addition, organizations have revised existing guidelines and rules. However, the effect after implementation is often not quite as significant as hoped (Rao, et al., 2016). For this reason, many policies have been equipped with action plans since about 2005 to actually implement the established policies and transform the practice. Another very important prerequisite for the actual implementation of the policy is that consistency, consequences and capacities exist within the company (Rao, et al., 2016). Consistency means that management’s observable support becomes visible as soon as a policy is implemented. The consequences are clear responsibilities which should be integrated into the policy. Moreover, the capacities that the company should have to promote gender equality include a unit, team or person who is/are a thematic expert and can monitor development. However, Rao et al. (2016) mention that these initiatives do not necessarily lead to success either. Sometimes partial measures are necessary or the measures have to be adapted to new circumstances to ensure that the implementation works. Mazur (2017) developed a four-step process to accompany and support the implementation of new or existing policies. Once the problem has been defined, this includes an assessment of whether a policy is necessary at all and what it should look like. The policy is then developed and implemented within an organization, followed by a review and control, if necessary fine-tuning and
improvement options to ensure full implementation. Finally, the process begins again with the problem discourse (Mazur, 2017). Since, according to Connell (2009), everything within an organisation is in a broader context of gender relations, it is important that the problem of unequal treatment is made visible and a strategy is developed to avoid this problem. Effects arise at all levels which have a significant influence on the organisation due to gender issues and can only be optimised by means of policies (Connell, 2009). Eyben (2012) has also addressed these dimensions and found out that equality policies can actively influence the individual behaviours of power figures because they break up the deeply involved structures within an organization. In addition, they strengthen the resources of women in particular and thus create a greater basis for equality (Eyben, 2012). Even though, as already mentioned, the development of such policies has gained in importance and relevance for many companies since 2005, it is still a rocky road to the final transformation. Full implementation is still strongly influenced by social norms in a society and deeply anchored in the members of companies (Rao, et al., 2016).

2.3.3 Resources

Resources have taken up a large part of research in gender equality research in recent years (Rao, et al., 2016). The focus was on women’s access to education and health care and the situation regarding violence against women. In an organizational context, resources are about using existing resources such as access to leadership, budgets or protection mechanisms against sexual harassment or violence correctly (Rao, et al., 2016).

2.3.4 Capabilities and Consciousness

Rao et al. (2016) mention in their book that it is important that people in a company are aware of their rights. The question must also be asked whether they value gender equality and whether they are willing and able to take steps towards a more gender-sensitive enterprise. Women should no longer see themselves as victims of an unchanging system but should become active themselves to change their situation (Rao, et al., 2016). Therefore, according to Riddell (2013), it is necessary that the individual employee undergoes an individual change since the individual change is the precursor of a community or system change. Through an individual learning process, significant progress can be made and people can be made to see themselves fundamentally differently and thus take measures against gender inequality (Rao, et al., 2016). But individual learning is not easy either. It is limited by the context in which it takes place. This can be the organizational, the regional or the national context that includes national culture (Rao, et al., 2016). This makes it important that measures are taken within organisations to support the learning process and thus increase awareness. To this end, Ghuznavi (2008) has developed several points based on a gender quality action learning cycle that organisations can apply to a better learning process. These are mainly about improving the working relationship between male and female employees, democratising working relationships between
managers and staff, and gender-specific company policies involving the need for more women in management positions. To make this possible, companies should offer more childcare facilities and extended parental leave after the employed woman has given birth (Ghuznavi, 2008). After the participation of people in this learning process within organisations, it is noted that awareness is clearly increased and analytical skills for the identification of gender equality problems and the changed perception of typical gender roles are improved. In addition, there is a greater awareness among senior management when it comes to understanding family needs and their connection with employment, leading to an improved working relationship between the genders (Rao, et al., 2016; Ghuznavi, 2008).
2.4 Theoretical synthesis

The literature review has shown that national culture has a considerable influence on society and a company. Different countries have different cultures and it is difficult to measure a culture. Departments such as International HRM deal with cultural diversity in companies and often deal with gender equality within the company. Which measures a company takes for a better gender equality is up to the company itself. By law, however, discrimination against employees on the basis of gender is prohibited in Switzerland. Companies must comply with these laws when operating in Switzerland. As the above literature has shown, though, the laws are not always adhered to, as prevailing social norms and deep structures prevail both in society and in companies.

The theoretical synthesis below illustrates the influence a national culture has on a company and its implementation of gender equality policies. It becomes apparent that the national culture influences a company’s relations with its employees. The treatment of employees and all personnel matters in a company is controlled by (international) human resource management. This supporting business unit in the company influences Rules & Policies, Resources, Capabilities & Consciousness and also Social norms & Structures in the respective company. Thus, the national culture flows through all these formal and informal units and constructs and ultimately influences the success in implementing gender equality measures.

Figure 2: Theoretical synthesis
3 Methodology

This chapter explains the methodology of the thesis and how the collection and processing of data are carried out to answer the elaborated research question. Each subchapter explains different approaches and methods used for the collection of the material in order to finally fulfil the purpose of the dissertation. At the end of each subchapter, a motivation for the approach of our choice is explained and adequately discussed.

3.1 Abductive research approach

In order to advance a successful investigation of a research question, it is of great importance to know and understand the connection between empirical data and existing theory in detail. There are two variants that harmonize in scientific research: The inductive approach is based on empirical facts and the deductive approach to logic, facts and assumptions (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). The latter shows with a lower risk which conclusions can be drawn from research on the basis of a logical process. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010) assume that the connection between the resulting empirical findings and the underlying theory is shown on the basis of their perception of their environment, from earlier research or from already known theories. The sources for the development of data collection are then analysed and explained (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). It is important that the deductive approach has an operationalized theoretical framework to show how the empirical data collection was developed and subsequently tested for correlation of theory (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). In contrast, the inductive approach describes laws that allow a repetitive universal validity using empiricism as an example. This exemplary generalization from individual cases is associated with more risk and leads to a higher uncertainty about validity, although the results of the observations should in turn influence the existing theory and contribute to its improvement (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In addition to the two traditional research approaches, there has also been a third one for some time. This consists of a combination of the two approaches mentioned above and is described as beneficial for explaining certain research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The formation of an explanation hypothesis leads to a final procedure that expands the knowledge to such an extent that it differs from deduction and induction. In some works, these two approaches are not described in sufficient detail and are only selected out of habit, although a mixture might be more appropriate (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This work initially focuses on earlier research and theoretical work on gender equality, but repeatedly combines this with empirical data and perceptions of the persons examined in the selected companies. This makes a return to further theories on the influence of culture on society or on gender equality inevitable and creates a link between the inductive and the deductive approach (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This combination and the interaction of the two approaches lead to more flexibility and a more fundamental interpretation of the study area. After defining an initial theoretical framework and focusing on the collection of empirical data, the authors of
this work recognized the need for a new complement. By choosing the abductive approach, the necessary flexibility could be maintained and new findings could be introduced time and again (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Only in this way could the authors gain a broad and deep understanding of the influence of Swiss culture on the implementation of policy in companies and ensure an adequate answer to the research question by constantly adding new contexts.

3.2 Qualitative research method

In order to find answers to the research question, a method must be described which describes how a study is to be conducted (Yin, 2009). The research methods differ in the characteristics qualitative or quantitative. In order to distinguish between these two methods, Yin (2009) differentiates between the two approaches using three questions: How is the data collected? How is the data analysed? So, how are the results presented? In order to be able to concentrate on details, qualitative methods often only include small units of analysis in a research framework, while a quantitative method pursues large-scale studies with the aim of covering as many aspects as possible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For a description of a situation to be understood, a method must be much less formalized, which according to Denscombe (2017) is the case in qualitative research and thus more effective than the more structured and thus more formal quantitative method. This concentrates on making the measurability of the extent of variations understandable (Denscombe, 2017).

In qualitative research, respondents are confronted with questions that are helpful in identifying the actual problem or question. The result is a database that reflects the real experiences and the importance this has for the persons under investigation (Creswell, 2007). In this way, the authors of this thesis can draw conclusions for the present work from this wealth of experience and examine the influence of Swiss culture on the implementation of the company’s gender equality policy. Provided that the persons interviewed are familiar with the situation and have dealt with the issue of equality between men and women and Swiss culture. It will become clear whether the qualitative research method can shed light on the current research gaps from different perspectives and thus stimulate further research. The fact that the international aspect plays a major role in this is demonstrated by the involvement of Swedish companies in order to be able to create an adequate database and thus optimally put the effects of Swiss culture into context. Therefore, the authors of this dissertation prefer only the qualitative method for this research, as this will lead to an optimal result.
3.3 Data Collection Techniques

To talk about qualitative or quantitative research results, the way in which data are collected must be examined. These differ in that numerical data are attributed to the quantitative and information as well as data from experience values of persons in the qualitative field (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). These data can come from both primary and secondary data collection, bearing in mind that primary data tend to produce more relevant results and should, therefore, be considered more appropriate for the study of the research question (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). To understand the influence of Swiss culture on gender equality policies, the authors will deliberately focus on primary data. They will proceed according to Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and collect the qualitative primary data through interviews and experiences. After each data collection, the authors decide on the relevance of each individual source and whether it should be used in whole or in part. This guarantees that the result finally corresponds to the initial question (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010).

3.3.1 Primary Data Collection

The primary data for this work are collected by means of interviews and field reports from relevant persons. These can be done personally (face-to-face), by telephone/Skype or by e-mail (Moser, 2014). Through these interviews, the authors of this work gain a detailed understanding of the results of their research question and can thus respond to the experience and knowledge of the person interviewed. In doing so, they collect further relevant data and can thus link and analyse them with existing information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Since the companies examined in this paper are companies based in Switzerland, most interviews were conducted by telephone/Skype. Face-to-face interviews and e-mail interviews are also available. In most cases, the questions were sent to the interviewees in advance so that they could prepare themselves for the interview. There was a low risk that the respondents could prepare themselves for the interview with standard statements, which, however, were corrected by the fact that follow-up questions were asked in the interview itself. With this in mind, misunderstandings and misinformation could be reduced to a minimum. With these surveys, the authors succeeded in gaining a better understanding and a solid basis for the influence of Swiss culture on the implementation of gender equality policies for companies in Switzerland.

3.3.2 Secondary Data Collection

In order to refine the analyses, secondary data, which can come from documents and other results, can also be added to the primary data mentioned above. These secondary data can usually be found in articles, online sources and books and are included in this work for better understanding (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). In doing so, they are particularly useful when introducing companies to data from online sources.
3.4 Research design

In order to demonstrate the way in which a research question is examined, it is relevant to relate the conceptual research problem to significant, feasible and empirical research. Based on the theory of Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010), an overall plan will be drawn up as a research design framework which will enable the creation of the databases and an analysis to be carried out. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) pointed out that it must be of interest for the application of qualitative research methods to concentrate on events and discoveries of subjects and to draw interpretations from them instead of focusing on the pure presentation of the hypotheses. So-called case studies are used here. According to Yin (2009), experiments, surveys and archive analyses are also adequate for qualitative research and offer content for extensive analyses. However, since the authors aim in this work at the functioning of the phenomenon “Swiss culture and its impact on the implementation of gender equality policies”, the choice of case study is most appropriate. According to Yin (2009), case studies are especially suited to investigate the how and why of a research question, and these are exactly the two questions the authors ask themselves here.

3.4.1 Multi-case study design

Since this work is not a unique occurrence and the research question is more complex than it could concentrate on a single case, the authors have decided to conduct a multi-case study. This is often used in sociological or business studies and, according to Yin (2009), has the advantage over the individual case study that several factors and cases are considered in the data collection and thus the analysis is more detailed than the investigation of an individual case. The single case study focuses on several subunits (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This would go beyond the scope of the research question under investigation here and is therefore analysed by means of data collection from several companies.

3.4.2 Appropriate sampling

In order to create an adequate analysis unit when collecting the database, a concept of population must first be decided to define the settings. From this, the research sample is then drawn, which can be used by the adequate population to control an external deviation and thus define a boundary for the aggregation of the results (Eisenhardt, 1989). This sample, also known as a random sample, is usually divided into two categories: Samples that allow statistical generalizations and targeted, predefined samples that meet the prerequisite for understanding a particular problem. The aim of this work is to understand a phenomenon and not to be able to prove on the basis of statistics whether something is true or false. Therefore, the sample was often not suitable for qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, researchers must select samples for their qualitative work that correspond to a specific scheme, relevance and awareness (Denscombe, 2017). Based on this insight, the team of authors deliberately decided to select suitable companies according to
predefined criteria and to interview experienced employees in a predefined area. According to Anisimova and Thomson (2012), this triangulation approach should be regarded as preferred that the necessary nuances be included in the study. The criteria used should be included in the targeted sample names and help the research team to investigate the purpose of the research and gain insights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In order to be able to answer the research question, the team of authors developed criteria that restrict the selection of companies and precisely define the persons interviewed within these companies. With these criteria, logical companies are deliberately selected and thus a smaller number with even richer and deeper data is available (Anisimova & Thomson, 2012). The companies can be divided into two categories:

- The company has Swiss roots and operates both within Switzerland and internationally.
- The company has Swedish roots and internationalised to Switzerland.

Within these enterprises the interviewed persons should fulfil the following criteria:

- A person must be familiar with the processes and policies of the HRM.
- The persons interviewed must have extensive knowledge of Swiss national culture.
- The person interviewed must be of Swedish or Swiss origin and/or be familiar with the identity of Swedish or Swiss culture.

3.5 Choice of case companies

With the imposed criteria and a broad diversification of typical women’s, men’s and mixed companies, the authors of this work have selected a number of companies of a certain size for the investigation of their research question and asked for a more detailed further investigation, which will get to the bottom of the research question. In order to provide an initial overview of the background to this empirical data, the companies based in Switzerland are briefly presented below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ericsson AG</td>
<td>Anonym</td>
<td>Head of HR</td>
<td>3rd of May 2018</td>
<td>Approx. 45 minutes</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish Trade Company</td>
<td>Anonym</td>
<td>Manager of Diversity and Inclusion</td>
<td>1st and 2nd of May 2018</td>
<td>Approx. 15 minutes</td>
<td>E-Mail with telephone consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLS AG</td>
<td>Christian Hurni</td>
<td>Head of Human Resources Competence Centre</td>
<td>15th and 16th of April 2018</td>
<td>Approx. 15 minutes</td>
<td>E-Mail with telephone consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Hospital</td>
<td>Anonym</td>
<td>1. Manager of Diversity</td>
<td>1. 16th of April 2018</td>
<td>1. Approx. 45 minutes</td>
<td>1. Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Teamleader HR</td>
<td>2. 17th of April 2018</td>
<td>2. Approx. 30 minutes</td>
<td>2. Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Swiss Government-owned Company</td>
<td>Anonym</td>
<td>Co-Head of Organizational Development</td>
<td>3rd of May 2018</td>
<td>Approx. 45 minutes</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Interviewees and case companies

3.6 Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to be able to look at the research questions from different angles, it is essential to choose an adapted structure in order to be able to compare the statements of key persons from different groups (Moser, 2014). The authors often limit their qualitative work to a small number of people and work methodically with unstructured and semi-structured questions. In the case of unstructured questions, the interviewee must pass on the content independently and is not directed in one direction by the interviewers. For example, the questions can be answered with: “Tell me...” to get started. In the case of semi-structured questions, on the other hand, the respondent is deliberately directed in one direction. So there are questions here, like: What was your consideration when you committed yourself to diversity? Since the authors of this thesis expect specific answers to their research question, it is best to deal with semi-structured questions and apply them in a focused interview. In this interview, it is important not to ask the interviewee any suggestive questions and to act as a neutral listener. However, it must be ensured that the flow of conversations does not run dry, that the topic is optimally covered and that there is specific demand if there are gaps in the answer. Ultimately, however, all interviews with the most diverse parties must have a uniform structure so that they can be compared with each other. This is most easily achieved by means of so-called guiding themes, which are based on the initial theme in a structured manner and thus shed light on a wide variety of perspectives (Moser, 2014). In order not to confuse the interviewees, complicated individual questions should be avoided. But even too many questions
packed into one question often irritate the respondent and he would not know what to answer to first.

### 3.6.1 Open-ended questions

How researchers proceed in an interview also depends on how they want to design the structure of the interview and what flow of conversation should result from it. Although the order plays an important role here, this is theoretically not predetermined (Moser, 2014). It is therefore much more relevant to focus on the types of question that can be titled open and closed. It must be differentiated what kind of answer the researchers hope for from the respondent. If one wants facts confirmed or clear statements from the interviewee, it is better to ask this with closed questions. However, if one wants an opinion or a detailed description, it is better to work with open questions. Since the authors of this work aim more at a subjective perception with their research question, they decided in their semi-structured interview to let the interviewees speak freely and to achieve a pleasant flow of conversation by means of many open questions, which makes possible to experience much information and opinions of the opposite person (Kumar, 2014). The atmosphere was deliberately chosen in such a way that an introductory small talk should break the barrier and thus the person interviewed could reveal a lot about his attitude and thoughts.

### 3.7 Operationalisation

In order to develop an interview guide, the authors of this study first had to gain a broad and deep understanding of the existing literature within the framework (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012) in order to obtain an overview of what was already available about the influence of Switzerland’s national culture on the implementation of gender equality policies in companies in Switzerland. Only then the authors of the thesis could develop an interview guide and the questions they wanted to ask the pre-selected companies. The questions contained therein had to be conceived in such a way that the representation of the real world represents a reference to the chosen theory (Potter, 1996). Thus, the interview questions in Appendix A, page IX, know the concepts mentioned and are operationalized on the basis of theory. On the following page, the table gives an overview of the operationalisation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Operations (Capabilities &amp; Consciousness)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>In order to gain a general understanding of the respondent and the selected company, respondents were asked to briefly introduce themselves and the company. The authors of this work also wanted to know what experience they have in the field of diversity and whether they have ever come into contact with Swedish culture. In order to obtain an initial assessment of the situation within the company, respondents were asked what the distribution of men and women looks like and how the general assessment of equality is regarded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationalisation</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>How do companies deal with the implementation of their gender equality policies in the context of internationalisation? This was discussed in these two questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture (Social norms &amp; Structure)</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>Through the survey on national culture and cultural conditions in Switzerland, the authors of this study gained a broad understanding of the perception of Swiss culture. In addition, characteristics of Swiss culture that were important for the implementation of gender equality policies opened up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equality in detail (Rules &amp; Policies)</td>
<td>11-17</td>
<td>The authors of the paper asked the respondents specific questions about their experiences with the influence of Swiss culture on their daily work in the company and about some important dimensions that could be connected with it. This made it possible to decipher whether the respondent is able to understand the connection between national culture and the implementation of policies and whether they are aware of their effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic situation</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>In order to understand the impact of business policies on the economic situation, a general understanding was asked with the help of questions specifically geared to business success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding questions</td>
<td>22-23b</td>
<td>At the end of the interview, the authors of the work asked the interviewees subsequent questions that linked the most important concepts of the theoretical framework. In addition, a measurement was carried out for ethical research in order to offer the persons involved full anonymity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Operationalisation*
3.8 Conducting Interviews

In order for the interviewees to prepare optimally for the interview, the authors of this work sent a draft by e-mail in advance. Through this behaviour, the authors were aware that the interviewed person was given the opportunity to prepare specifically for the questions, thus enabling more standardized answers according to internal guidelines. By the active demand and addition in the personal interview from the authors, the reality is nevertheless ensured and a complete picture of the current situation could be covered. In addition, the authors did not adhere to the order of the questionnaire during the course of the conversation, but adapted the respective questions to the situation to be found, which makes it even more truthful. Through this semi-structured approach, which behaved as somewhat more unstructured as planned, it has not always been easy to find the central theme for the empirical findings in transcription.

Due to the distance of the companies, all of which are based in Switzerland, all kinds of personal interviews were used. During a stay in Switzerland, the two authors of the work were able to conduct a personal face-to-face interview. In addition, the interviews with four people were conducted by telephone, one of whom answered initially by e-mail and the telephone conversation was only conducted to clarify and inquire about certain facts. Finally, the authors of this dissertation were able to hold a Skype interview with a company. During the face-to-face and the Skype interview, it was possible to analyse the person’s behaviour and to see how they reacted to the questions with facial expressions and gestures. By recording all interviews, a subsequent analysis was simplified and transcription was possible in more detail. This recording was supplemented by the notes made by one of the two authors during the interview, while the second person could concentrate purely on the questions. Finally, it must be said that, if requested by the persons, the empirical data have been sent in advance for verification.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

In order for to form a picture of the amount of data, the authors of this work must first sort the data so that an analysis makes sense (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Due to the size of this amount of data, Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010) recommend a skin peculiarity when dividing the data into smaller components in order to reduce complexity and to be able to address the problems individually. Although there is no detailed and recognised approach to how data analysis should be carried out, the authors of this work nevertheless decided to proceed according to the mention of Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013). The data of the transcribed interviews from the companies selected by the authors of this study will be reduced in order to better focus and to achieve an abstraction of the data. The data displayed afterwards can then be analysed and processed more easily, as they have been better adapted to the theoretical synthesis by simplifying the reduction, and are thus summarized into one conclusion. The research question to be investigated on the implementation of gender
policies within companies in Switzerland in relation to the influence of Swiss culture is to be answered with segments from the interviews. These have been thoroughly checked and transferred as identified data into the theoretical synthesis. The concluding and overall lying connection to the Swiss national culture allows the authors of this work a conclusion of the data analysis (Miles, et al., 2013).

3.10 Quality of research

The link between validity and reliability must be regarded as relevant for the acceptance of a scientific research project and guarantee the acceptance of the proof provided therein. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the data collected is accurate and truthful and that the results mentioned and their quality are verified as valid and reliable by various approaches (Yin, 2009).

3.10.1 Validity

To be sure that the data collected are in fact generally appropriate and therefore correct, the authors of this work check the method to see whether the research area has been examined to the extent that it can refer to validity (Denscombe, 2017). Denscombe (2017) also writes that qualitative data are often less valid than quantitative data, as study participants can control their statements more consciously or experience shows insufficient content. In order to examine the impact of cultures on the implementation of gender equality policies, the authors of this study had to start a discussion on whether the data collected by the companies are suitable for this topic and can be applied to the other companies in Switzerland for a detailed analysis in comparison to the Swedish companies. In the interviews, the authors of this work had to concentrate on correctly interpreting the motives of the interviewees and recognizing signals at an early stage. In addition, it had to be ensured that no statements were misinterpreted or that the respondent was unconsciously directed in the wrong direction (Denscombe, 2017). In order that the trustworthiness of earlier research can also be examined, Silverman (2001) recommends a critical examination of the literature found. In this way, valuable sources can be better distinguished from the others and thus contribute a considerable increase to the initial situation (Silverman, 2001). To this end, the authors of this work compared the various literatures and examined them for similarities. If the underlying basis was similar and contributed further parts to the research, they were classified as trustworthy and integrated into this work. This basis was finally used for the collection of the empirical data. To better understand this data, Kumar (2014) points out that the validity of a study can be increased by triangulation. After the initial analysis, some of the authors of this work returned to the respondents and tried to look at the same data from a different perspective (Kumar, 2014). In the present work, this was particularly necessary for the e-mail responses, as there was greater uncertainty as to the content. Misunderstandings were cleared up and uncertainties were reduced. Phenomena such as culture in connection with the implementation of policies are very difficult to comprehend and to interpret correctly for a detailed understanding.
Nevertheless, the authors of the work are convinced that the triangulation carried out has led to a valid interpretation of the collected data and that the understanding and trustworthiness of the content is generally valid. This also guarantees the validity of the analysis.

3.10.2 Reliability

As the authors of this study have carried out qualitative studies with their companies, it is difficult to test them repeatedly under similar conditions according to the guidelines for theoretical reliability (Kumar 2014). This reliability shows the trustworthiness of the collected data and thus allows an assessment of it. Such an assessment is often measured by the perceptibility of the observations gained and their coverage with the intentions of the participants. The complexity of interviews with different people from different companies does not always allow consistent and similar results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The authors of this dissertation have therefore taken care not to use companies and persons who have already been interviewed in another study under similar conditions since a repetition would not lead to a reliable result and offer these interpretation possibilities. It is also important to measure qualitative studies in terms of reliability and confirmability (Kumar, 2014). In order to ensure a high degree of reliability, the authors of this study have described the methodological approach in detail, giving the reader a deep insight and transparency into the structure of this work. He should be able to understand how the analyses and results came about and on what foundation these statements are based. The collected data in the form of interviews were first recorded on tape and during the interview notes were taken, then transcribed and can, therefore, be viewed by the reader at any time. The interview questions are also available in written form in Appendix A, page IX.

3.11 Research Ethics

In times of transparency and rapid availability via the various online channels, the rather uncomplicated approach of qualitative research in recent years has led to a significant increase in ethical considerations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). When collecting and interpreting research data, it was of utmost importance for the authors of this work that the respondents find themselves in an ethically correct environment. Many questions, e.g. why the authors of this research question have the right to draw on the knowledge and experience of the interviewees or whether the authors mentioned can exert pressure on the companies with the statements, first had to be clarified and ethical correctness ensured. This thesis is about finding out the influence of Swiss national culture on the implementation of gender equality policies in companies in Switzerland. This research question was asked by the two authors with Swiss citizenship during their stay in Sweden. Through their insights into social structures, they wondered how Swedish companies that are internationalising in Switzerland would deal with this if they suddenly realized that their working conditions were worse than their standards. In order to draw an adequate comparison,
Swiss companies were also consulted for the study and asked for an analysis. The authors mentioned have a social science education in the field of business administration and thus the necessary knowledge to analyse the organizational framework conditions in companies. Therefore, respondents are aware of the background and legality of the people facing them and can be considered legitimate. Since respondents are first made aware of the possibility of anonymity, the aspect of protecting the interests of the participants is also guaranteed. In addition, all participants in the interviews were interviewed in advance, they decided to participate voluntarily and the authors promised to submit the final results. The interviewees knew in advance about the investment in time and their share in the dissertation. Furthermore, compliance with the laws of Sweden and Switzerland is guaranteed. This does not mean that the work can be considered ethically correct in compliance with the laws, but it is particularly important that no sensitive issues are investigated that could conflict with the laws of these countries. Thus, all fundamental aspects of Denscombe (2017) were observed. The authors of this thesis also ensured in the interviews that the participants could find themselves in an environment of trust. Small talk was just as much a part of this as the possibility of not answering personal questions. The sensitive content of statements about the company’s own gender equality, the implementation of which in Switzerland continues to be very controversial, was treated with great sensitivity. In addition, the authors offered to send the interviewees to read through the transcribed interview to avoid possible ambiguities and misinterpretations.

In order not to deceive the interviewees, Denscombe (2017) writes that it is of great importance to speak emphatically and unequivocally about the goal of the dissertation. With this theoretical knowledge, the authors of this work have already made clear in the survey what goal they wanted to pursue and how this can be achieved with their help. In the course of the interview, the investigators used the findings already gained for further support and announced their experiences in Sweden, among other things. This created confidence and often a little astonishment, which was very useful for further discussion. Finally, it should be mentioned that the authors of this work have respected all copyrights and adhered to Harvard’s citation standards.
4 Empirical findings
With the help of the theoretical synthesis, which allows the reader a clearly structured process, the following chapter was created to introduce the empirical data collected. In this section, the interviewees and the companies are introduced and their experiences and findings from their day-to-day work are presented. However, in order to maintain the above-mentioned theoretical synthesis and avoid a loss of information, each case is presented separately.

4.1 Cases
During the period from the 17th of April 2018 to the 7th of May 2018, all interviews were conducted with the selected persons of the companies meeting the criteria. The interviewees have one thing in common as HR persons and/or as middle management members. This factor is important in that the basic knowledge of equal opportunities for women and men must be considered relevant in order to obtain consistent information about experiences and to be able to analyse these statements.

4.1.1 Swedish companies with operations in Switzerland
4.1.1.1 Ericsson AG - Head of HR

Ericsson AG (hereinafter referred to as Ericsson), based in Berne, is a Swiss service supplier for telecommunications providers. The company is part of the Swedish group Telefonaktiebolaget LM Ericsson based in Kista near Stockholm. The interview partner holds the position of Head of HR at Ericsson and is thus responsible for the 200 employees in Switzerland. Moreover he is a member of the Executive Board. Currently, approximately 15% of Ericsson’s staff in Switzerland are women. One of them is a woman in management leading a team of about twelve employees. The mother company in Sweden has set a global target of 30% women in the Group by 2020.

Culture, Social norms & Structure

According to the interviewee, gender equality is viewed critically in some parts of Switzerland. The whole process is rather standardized in Switzerland, “[…] there are different family models, but one is still not as far as one should be.” A woman who works full-time and gives her children to a day-care centre would probably take a critical look in some parts of the country and this constellation could even lead to discussions. However, according to the interviewee, Switzerland is moving in the right direction, “[…] but more slowly than other countries. I’m not in the position to assess the situation in Sweden.” Therefore the Head of HR couldn’t make an appraisal on Sweden. However, if he has contact with people from other countries, it becomes apparent that the Swiss model should still develop gender-identical attitudes towards jobs and careers in general. “Since the distribution of roles in the household is also a social norm or structure in Switzerland, I believe that the man should play a more important role in the family structure”, mentioned the Head of HR. He often
hears from employees with somewhat older children that the employees feel that they have put their careers a little too much in the foreground. “As a result, some of the employees missed important stages in the child’s life and also noticed that there is not the same connection to the child as the child has to the mother. In general, I am of the opinion that 100% gender equality is possible in a company.” Nevertheless, the interviewee may doubt whether this is realistic, “[…] since Swiss culture is rather tradition-conscious.” The Head of HR also mentioned that in Switzerland, “Unfortunately, there are still rather few women enrolled in technical programmes at universities. This makes it difficult for Ericsson to fill management positions with women despite our efforts, as a technical background is important for those positions.” Therefore, for a higher proportion of women in such a technical sector as Ericsson operates in, it would also require a change in the Swiss population that technical professions and studies are not regarded as male.

Rules & Policies

The Head of HR mentioned in the interview that Ericsson in Switzerland is SQS (Swiss Association for Quality and Management Systems) certified in the area of fair compensation, which means that men and women with the same qualifications earn the same amount. He indicated: “This certification proves that women and men earn exactly the same amount.” In addition, events are organised in the interest of gender equality. Furthermore, there is a policy, the Code of Business Ethics, which must be signed and obeyed by all employees. Ericsson’s customers must also sign and comply with this Code of Business Ethics. According to the interviewee, this policy stipulates that no one will be subject to discrimination on the grounds of gender, race or sexual orientation this ensures compliance with Swiss law. “The parent company in Sweden has an influence on the policies to the extent that the equality policy is set by the management and the Board of Directors in Sweden”, said the Head of HR. According to the interviewee, an attempt is being made to pursue the same policies as far as possible, but also to respond to local conditions. This can be seen, for example, on fathering leave. “In Sweden, fatherhood leave is much longer than in Switzerland. This benefit of the parent company in Sweden has not been taken over by the Swiss company”, but has been adapted to Switzerland and its rules. The interviewee emphasized, “I have to say quite honestly, I really don’t think we have a gap between man and woman in our company”.

Resources, Capabilities & Consciousness

According to the interviewee, Ericsson is very progressive in the implementation of different working time models for women and men: “For example, all employees are not expected to arrive at the office at 8:00 a.m. and location-independent work is also encouraged.” As already mentioned, active efforts are being made to recruit more women into management positions. Nonetheless, when assigning such positions, it is always checked which qualifications the applicants bring along and not to promote a person who would actually be less qualified for the purpose of fulfilling quotas, “[…]
it is always the work delivered that counts.” No differences can be observed between the results of the work of women and men in the company: “On the contrary, in some areas women are better suited as managers than men. It always depends on the contradictions, in some teams it is better to have a woman as a leader and in other teams it is better to leave the leadership to a man.” In addition, the interviewee sees the tendency for women to be underestimated as a challenge in the working world. “Moreover, some women are disadvantaged in jobs, as there is still a bugbear child and family.” Some employers have the impression that they would face costs in the event of pregnancy and that this would burden the company’s results. It may also be feared that the employed woman will not return to work after pregnancy.

4.1.1.2 Swedish Trade Company - Manager of Diversity and Inclusion

An internationally operating Swedish trade company, which wants to remain anonymous. The company is active at various locations in Switzerland. The company has more than 1,000 employees in Switzerland and can therefore be described as a large scale enterprise. Moreover, it has a gender distribution of 50% at all levels, both at grassroots and management level (Homepage of the anonymous company, 2018). Thanks to these efforts, the company has established itself at the forefront of gender certification. The authors of this thesis interviewed a Swedish manager from the field of diversity and inclusion about her experiences. She has been in Switzerland for seven years and has gained a lot of insight into the differences between Sweden and Switzerland. Above all, she has found that Switzerland is much more conservative in its behaviour than Sweden.

Culture, Social norms & Structure

The Swedish manager acknowledges Switzerland as a very traditional nation who likes to live in outdated family images. “Unfortunately, the distribution of roles in Switzerland is still very conservative, which is partly caused by the system. Because crèches are very expensive and there is a lack of lunch for school children, many parents are forced to make a rational decision so that one person has to stay at home.” Although it is probably also a question of age - the younger generation is slowly but steadily changing - there are still many families who switch to a traditional family image after the birth of their first child, in which the main earner is employed up to 100% and the low-income earner strives to reduce the workload in order to be able to perform the emerging family work. Until now, this has also been expressed in such a way that women in Switzerland who work 100% after the birth of a child are punished socially and are not considered a good mother. “Many women often feel like a bad mother because they would be much away from the children if they worked.” However, if a woman decides to continue her career as before, she is often condemned and the development of the children is closely monitored. It should not really matter who takes which responsibility, it should even be a joint project in which both partners are equally involved and have the same opportunity for personal development. After some time in Switzerland, the diversity manager of the Swedish
company notes that this sometimes has a too negative impact when a family decides against the well-known traditional family models. “Many companies have unconscious prejudices against innovations and then find it difficult to make changes. They then consciously adhere to cultural values.” But women also play an important role in making clear where they want to go. The diversity manager often talks to women who have too many irons in the fire and want to do it all perfectly. In addition to their mother role, they also want to show more commitment at work so that they can fight for their rights. The company employs many women from other companies who did not consistently implement such a policy, thus these employees are not aware of which rights they could claim. She does not believe that this stereotypical condemnation of traditional role models is intentional, but that these images are simply still too firmly anchored in people’s minds. “Such unconscious prejudices often exist over generations and it is a great challenge to get away from them. Therefore, one must begin to conduct awareness raising training for all members of the company.”

**Rules & Policies**

The EDGE Lead Level Award (an award, which exemplifies outstanding innovation) clearly shows how comprehensive the Swedish retail company’s gender equality policy is. As an exemplary company, male employees have up to two months paternity leave, which can be extended up to one year by unpaid leave. The same applies to the mother after six months of maternity leave. In addition, the company supports its employees with flexible working models and allows part-time work anywhere. The clear policy is an important part of the corporate strategy and is implemented in every detail. There are no wage differences and the proportion of men and women at all levels is 50%. In fact, this has already led to such an extent that the company has had an impact in countries where gender equality is of secondary importance (e.g. Japan) so that a change in society has taken place. “If we disagree with our values with a social structure, we try to pass on our ideas to our local employees. Among other things, we succeeded in changing the wage differences in Japan with our approach and managed to rethink society.” This is also the aim of the policy: the company wants to illustrate the values in such a way that they are taken for granted. The Diversity Manager is of the opinion that it is easy to implement. “Every person in the company lives the same basic human values that are already taken for granted in Sweden, but should be applied all over the world. This will make companies much more open and see more opportunities and no more obstacles.” The understanding of equality should be anchored in people’s minds in such a way that any deviation from it is automatically regarded as discrimination. And that should apply to both genders. The company continues to invest in innovation to further promote gender equality. Recent attempts have been made to share the same job between parents. “It is simply of central importance that this is done sustainably and represents an ideal supplement to the way we work. After all, it should be a win-win situation for the company and its employees.” To ensure that all employees feel treated equally, there are no promotions from the company. Each
employee must apply for the next step and the best candidate receives the new position. No quotas are therefore required, but there is always a very wide choice. “Women in particular need to be increasingly aware that they can be suitable for all positions and only need to have the courage to apply. To not present oneself below one’s own value is the motto here from my point of view.” Implementing gender equality is also easy for the company, as it ensures that the people it recruits correspond to its corporate culture. This is based on Swedish values and therefore focuses on a humanist approach.

Resources, Capabilities & Consciousness

“Not only Swedish culture alone should judge people according to a humanistic approach but all cultures of this world. This value is an important resource in fair business.” The diversity manager mentioned this as the company’s focus. Companies must be aware that everything that results from gender equality is regarded as discrimination. Measures are taken irrespective of gender to create a fair and transparent basis on which the employee is regarded as a human being. A company does not even have to spend special resources. If they are all treated equally, their reputation will be sharpened and returns will automatically adjust to the many benefits. According to the diversity manager’s experience, men and women contribute similar contributions in a team: “My experience is that the presentation of the two genders is not differentiable and they achieve similarly good results. Therefore, there is no gender to be preferred and diversity always brings advantages.” This should be used for the benefit of a company. It is up to both genders to implement this, so women not only have to do more for their rights, but it is up to both genders to make appropriate efforts. However, the prerequisite for this is that the company management is aware of this topic and initially invests a great deal in the training of employees. “Therefore, it is important to conduct the mentioned awareness raising trainings for all members of an enterprise”, mentioned the diversity manager. It is important that this management sets a good example and lives by human values. According to the diversity manager, no quota is required, as the understanding of equality simply has to be integrated into the DNA. Switzerland’s conservative values need not necessarily be changed, but a different awareness developed. The main point here is that, if nothing changes at the social level, in other words in politics, the companies are responsible. Within a company, a resource of diversity and inclusion managers must be created who can monitor the entire process and thus implement the existing guidelines in compliance with the law.

4.1.2 Swiss companies

4.1.2.1 BLS AG - Christian Hurni - Head of Human Resources Competence Centre

BLS AG (hereinafter referred to as BLS), headquartered in Berne, is a Swiss railway company which is active in passenger traffic on the one hand and maintains infrastructures on the other. The company operates several train routes in Switzerland and is the second largest public transport company in Switzerland.
Christian Hurni is head of the Human Resources Competence Centre and leads a team of twelve employees in this function. The entire BLS concern has a total of 3,162 employees as of December 2017, 84.1% of whom are male and 15.9% female. Of eight members of the Executive Board, seven are male and one is female. The above-mentioned proportion of women in the company is thus also very well reflected in the Executive Board.

**Culture, Social norms & Structure**

Mr Hurni is of the opinion that culture has a high influence on gender equality: “Especially the values that are lived within families. Such values have a strong influence on one’s own values.” In addition, Mr Hurni himself has learned that there are also many regional policy differences: “For example, attitudes in a rural area are different from those in a city.” However, there is a peculiarity in Switzerland that there is de facto equality between men and women, but stereotypical ideas still prevail, for example in the distribution of roles within the family. This is in no way conducive to equality between men and women. Another interesting fact, which Mr Hurni mentioned is, “[…] that the percentage of well-educated women is higher than that of men.” However, it does not appear that this can subsequently be continued in the career. This may also be due to the observations of the interviewee that “the distribution of roles in households has often fallen back into the classical frames in recent years.” When asked whether the father should take on a more important role in the family structure, Mr Hurni replied that this was the task of politicians and companies to promote such cultures. Ultimately, the foundations must be laid for part-time careers and genuine care systems. On the other hand, he is convinced that “the role of the father in the family is strongly influenced by his own values.” As already mentioned, BLS employs a high proportion of men. According to Mr Hurni, this is mainly due to the fact that many classic male professions such as train drivers, mechanics and engineers are offered. The proportion of women in consulting is then higher, including departments such as travel agency consulting, marketing and personnel.

**Rules & Policies**

Switzerland’s laws are complied with by enshrining the rules in the employment conditions. There, “all forms of discrimination against employees, whether based on gender, gender orientation, or the like, are prevented.” According to Mr Hurni, gender equality at BLS is primarily controlled by values: “This is not entirely easy, since the stereotypical distribution of roles is still partly anchored in the minds of employees.” Mr Hurni sees no discrepancies between the policy against gender discrimination and its implementation in practice. This is because an increased maternity leave and a return to work guarantee with a part-time job of at least 60% are offered: “The woman can also take an unpaid break after maternity leave of up to six months, which is highly appreciated by the employees.” Measures are also taken to combat pay discrimination, so that employees receive the same salary for the same
position, regardless of whether they are men or women, no later than three years after starting work.

Resources, Capabilities & Consciousness

With regard to gender equality consciousness in the company, Mr Hurni has indicated that “a quota of women as well as part-time opportunities for men and women in top management positions should be promoted.” This is done by BLS and for about two months a member of the Executive Board has been working 90% during four days. “It is also particularly important to promote the networking of women so that they can exchange ideas with each other”, indicated Mr. Hurni. It was mentioned several times in the interview that gender equality is present at BLS and “is also lived.” Both, women and men are entitled to part-time work. Mr Hurni explains that women are extremely appreciated for their values and their interaction with other people. What he has observed is that the values of women in management positions are partly converging with those of men. The interviewee also mentioned that such women in management positions often justify why they have no children or that childcare was regulated. In some cases, Mr Hurni would like to see a more positive attitude on the part of women and sees this as a major challenge.

4.1.2.2 University Hospital - Manager of Diversity and Teamleader of HR

The large university hospital from Switzerland, which wants to remain anonymous, is a complete hospital that covers and offers all medical faculties. It is divided into research, inpatient operations and emergency medicine and has a high proportion of women in many areas. The company employs more than 1,000 people and can therefore be described as a large scale enterprise (Homepage of the anonymous company, 2018). With a female quota of 75%, the company is thus to be regarded as a gender-specific exception. In management or in the medical professions still dominated by men, however, the rate is significantly lower and is below 50%. Although many women study medicine, this proportion is not reflected in the company. In this case, one interviewee is a teamleader in HR and the other interviewee is responsible for personnel development and, as equal opportunities officer, for monitoring internal processes arising from the company’s equal opportunities policy.

Culture, Social norms & Structure

The Manager of Diversity sees a big difference between the generations when it comes to issues such as gender equality: “The older generation often lives in a more traditional world where patterns of typical role models are clearly present. The man is considered to be the breadwinner and should therefore take care of the main income, while the woman as mother should take care of the upbringing of the descendants.” This model is hardly to be found in the younger generation. “For younger people, it is much more important that everyone can realize themselves and
that a young family is seen more as active interaction.” Nevertheless, many companies are managed by older generations, which suggests that change is difficult in the beginning. Successors for male managers are then often also sought from male applicants. “I often hear from managers that women don’t want to take responsibility and as long as the man earns more than the woman, that won’t change.” This model is regarded by the University Hospital as backward and no longer corresponds to the current conditions and attitudes of the younger generations. It is not the Swiss standards that need to be changed so that the father should assume more responsibility within the family structure, as in Sweden, but women should delegate more and make it clear that they have exactly the same right to their careers and profession. Nevertheless, it is also important that young parents in particular are supported in planning and implementation and those issues such as paternity leave are discussed. But more part-time work would also help, but in Swiss culture part-time work is still accepted on an equal footing with other cultures. The HR teamleader says, “especially in rural areas, tradition is still an important part of social coexistence and typical family models such as a full-time father and a part-time housewife/mother are still largely lived out. This ultimately goes so far that a woman who becomes pregnant no longer receives the same support as before, since it is assumed that a massive reduction in work will be sought after giving birth. In the university hospital described here, too, this inhibition threshold is often reached and not implemented politically.”

**Rules & Policies**

It is precisely this policy that covers a great number of points at the large Swiss university hospital, which on paper makes it possible to implement equality between men and women in accordance with the law. The hospital offers, among other things, its own day care centre, a kindergarten and even a school that enables parents to work with a heavy workload and family care. Other protection mechanisms are also mentioned, the HR teamleader mentions, for example, that pregnant women with a fixed-term contract of employment are protected to such an extent that their contract is automatically extended for the period until after maternity leave. “The management of the company is very interested in ensuring that the policy is also optimally implemented in everyday life.” To this end, they promote implementation through measures such as the active use of unstereotypical images in application procedures or the integration of ideas of women and men in atypical professions within meetings. For example, more women are often identified as managers in job advertisements and men are also employed in typical female occupations such as midwife. But even in non-typical hospital professions such as the kitchen, one must be aware of gender-neutral policies. “I noticed that at Easter the canteen kitchen created the Easter bunnies according to stereotypical models. The male chocolate Easter bunny represented a doctor and the female version a nurse. Of course, this happened completely unconsciously, yet it shows the traditional way of thinking that still prevails.” The diversity manager states that, “[…] there is a growing awareness within the company that diversified teams achieve better and more efficient results
and that new solutions are constantly being found. Measures such as the conscious search for suitable women for management positions or the recruitment of more men for the typical female care professions are also surveyed.” The HR teamleader mentioned a special case of an executive position in the medical committee for which she went as far as Finland to find a suitable woman for the application process: “At the beginning, the people involved were not happy about the fact that a woman had to be called in for this application process and that she had to be found all the way to Finland. But in the end everyone was convinced that this had been the right way to bring the necessary diversity into the process”. This is a test of a quota control applied in this area. Until a rethink will take place, this will now be tried and after a certain period of time analysed whether it makes sense to apply this to other areas as well. The diversity manager herself pointed out when she looked at the whole topic that every person in the human resources department must always be aware that the applicable guidelines are being implemented. “We must always make it clear to ourselves that our behaviour affects all areas and that we do not always fall back into old patterns.” For example, contributions to the intranet must be gender-neutral, which is not always easy in stereotypical professions. Fears must also be reduced during implementation. “Many men in management positions often feel threatened by the broader competition and would therefore prefer men in the team”, commented the HR teamleader. It must be possible to demonstrate the benefits of diversity and thus raise awareness of equal opportunities in practice.

**Resources, Capabilities & Consciousness**

However, strengthening this awareness must not be one-sided and must be supported by all those involved. Women must also be aware of their responsibilities and stand up for their rights. Unfortunately, the diversity manager still notes that “in family planning, women are more willing to traditionally look after their families and take on the role of housewives, which reduces their workload. They’re losing valuable work experience and it’s clear their wages and promotions are suffering.” At the university hospital, care is taken to ensure that wage differentials do not exceed the five percent discrimination threshold and that both women and men are considered in promotions and judged on gender-neutral performance. This is not always easy, says the HR teamleader. “Women often demand much lower wages than they would be entitled to and it is not easy to lead the increase into the field. This is then also not fair and transparent towards men. Here it needs a lot of sensitivity and a skilful basis for discussion.” This requires high investments in human resources and clear management guidelines. The company must consciously accept more effort in order to take this additional step in the application process and, as explained in the previous section, also look for alternatives outside the existing possibilities. In order to have a sufficiently broad application basis, sometimes more time must be invested in the search, which leads to higher costs. In the long term, however, this will definitely pay off for the company. But the university hospital is investing even more in the future of its diversified managers. “Mentoring programs for young female doctors and future days for female medical students at the local university have
recently been intensified in order to raise awareness. All this would have to be rounded off by additional, temporary quotas in order to achieve far-reaching equality”. In the eyes of the two interviewees at the University Hospital, fundamental equality is achievable in the medium term. However, the above-mentioned investments in human resources as well as an increase in the awareness of all those involved and an easing of the socially anchored tradition are necessary. And since cultures are difficult to change, it will probably take several generations before the final goal is achieved. “I hope, but do not believe, that this goal will be achieved in my professional life”, concludes the diversity manager.

4.1.2.3 International Swiss Government-owned Company - Co-Head of Organizational Development

The Co-Head of Organizational Development for a large, internationally active Swiss company based in Berne, with more than 1,000 employees (Homepage of the anonymous company, 2018) has many years of professional experience in gender equality issues. She comes from the Netherlands and has a different perspective on Swiss culture. Dutch culture is much closer to Scandinavian, i.e. Swedish culture, more on this in the next chapter. The company is known as a service provider and currently still in state hands and attaches great importance to equality between men and women. Compared to other companies in Switzerland, it has above-average figures in terms of gender distribution. This means that 17% of top management and 50% of the rest of the company are women.

Culture, Social norms & Structure

From a subjective point of view, a country’s culture has a very great influence on local businesses. What was important, however, was the position of man and woman in it and the self-confidence with which they appear in a company. External perception plays a not insignificant role here, since the Co-Head of Organizational Development is perceived quite differently as a Dutch Woman, mother and career woman than when she compares herself with Swiss women with similar constellations: “I notice that my work colleagues accept me in these different roles much more than if I would be a Swiss woman. This has to do with the fact that hierarchies are handled and lived differently in more northern countries than in Switzerland. This hierarchical thinking therefore does not exist in the Netherlands or Sweden and opinions are communicated to men independently when it serves a cause.” This avoids dilution of the statement over several steps. The traditional family image is still widespread in Switzerland. “It would be important for both members of the partnership to assume the same responsibilities in a family. And here it would be very important for women to open up and get away from the idea of looking after their children. They need to learn to let go and consider other care methods to focus on their careers.” The Co-Head also says that it is not important to always want to do everything 100%; “They don’t have to dance at several weddings and try to reconcile family and job and to be perfectionist in both places, they should
also be able to take themselves back and concentrate on one thing. However, this is only possible if both partners can move in the same direction in a relationship and tasks can be delegated. It must also be possible to make concessions.” She often thinks that the Swiss here are far too orderly and always want to please everyone. It does not mean that the people in the North are less orderly, it is just another statement about the perfectionist behaviour of the Swiss. This cultural difference has a lot to do with the process of people’s perception. In many cases, prejudices are accepted by other people, and if you do not act in this way, there is a threat of social condemnation. “The Swiss have a strong image of a society in their minds. And if someone does not correspond to this picture, a condemnation of their behaviour quickly follows.” Only these biased ways of thinking would have to be limited and the benefits of people’s different qualities could be better identified.

Rules & Policies

The equality policy of the above-mentioned company is comprehensive and complies with applicable Swiss law. Discrimination is avoided in so far as the policy provides, among other things, for action in certain situations. “For example, when we hire a talented young woman, the question quickly arises of how she will continue to receive support if she chooses family planning. This is not part of the application process and it is decided as if she would be a man. She must be considered the capable person she is.” The most difficult part is probably the introduction of equal pay for equal work. Especially in a large traditional company like this, it is very difficult to adapt past decisions to current situations. The Co-Head mentions historical decisions: “In the glorious 1990s, for example, many managers, especially male managers, received above-average wage increases because the economic situation allowed for these conditions during this period. Today, these high wages would have to be revised downwards to achieve equality. It is economically impossible to adjust the wages of all persons to these excessive wages. At the same time, it is not possible to adjust wages downwards, as Switzerland has a high level of employee protection.” This makes it virtually impossible to reduce the current wage gap to zero within a very short time.

In order for the perfect policy in theory to be implemented optimally and according to plan in practice, high investments in resources are required. The interviewee sees the need for a quota as a key measure. Only in this way could the standards be anchored in all minds of the companies. This quota can be limited in time until there is an active awareness and everyone realises that equality only brings benefits and ensures more diversity and integration. “In a team with equal distribution of men and women, consensus building is greater and leads to better results than in a homogeneous team. In addition, innovative and creative ideas often exist on a broader level, as women and men use different hemispheres of the brain.” This means that more women are needed in teams through quotas so that this increase in results can be made visible and a change can be noticed.
As already mentioned, the management of this company in Switzerland has an above-average number of women and the Group CEO is even one of the few women in the CEO position in a large scale enterprise in Switzerland. Change requests from the Co-Head reach the top management again and again and are included in the strategic planning there: “I am in constant contact with the Group CEO, because my work brings me closer to the grassroots and I can pass on this knowledge. This ensures compliance with the guidelines. Regardless of the prevailing culture, these should then be implemented in conformity.”

Resources, Capabilities & Consciousness

It is a major investment in a company’s resources when it comes to implementing policies. Because: “The top management must always be aware of the issue and must not lose focus. It is important to make decisions without prejudice and to accept people as such”, a company must be aware of what influences the effects of the decision and how its behaviour can contribute to change. It is necessary to develop a special unit to control these mechanisms and to support the management again and again with new facts. Although cultures control the decisions of leaders, these people can make the same decisions to rethink society. “You have to keep trying out new ideas and provide the necessary resources to find a suitable basis for further action.” The Co-Head says, “[…] that the company invests a large part in human resources in order to attract suitable employees. This pays off immediately and the creativity and diversity ensures a targeted course for the entire company.” Ultimately, everything has to do with perception. If a person is convicted in advance and this leads to a decision based on it, there will be no acceptable solution. “It is therefore important not to stereotype people and accept them as they are.”
5 Analysis

In the following chapter, the empirical data obtained are linked to the theoretical framework and the authors of this work distinguish between discrepancies and similarities. In order to be able to define a fundamental discussion and a clear framework, the authors stick to the representation of the structure in the empirical data.

5.1 Culture, Social norms & Structure

As Schein (2004) defined, culture is a group of shared values that is recognized in the structure of people’s actions. This correlates very well with the answers of our interview partners. BLS mentioned that there are big differences between the countryside and the city in terms of values. Exactly the same was also mentioned by the Swiss University Hospital. Switzerland is rather tradition-conscious, although this varies from region to region as described above. This tradition-conscious attitude can also be found in the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension according to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010). The relatively high level in Switzerland implies a rigid adherence to values, norms and ways of thinking. Swiss traditions are strongly based on role models that have been lived out for generations. This theoretical basis is very well illustrated by the statement of the Swedish trade company. The manager mentioned that sometimes there can occur negative consequences if a family decides against the well-known traditions regarding the family models in addition, it should also not be that women feel like bad mothers when they want to make a career, the Swedish trading company said. Moreover, according to the Swiss University Hospital many companies, including hospitals, are often run by older people. Since a chief physician needs a lot of experience, it is clear that older people tend to hold such positions. These, in turn, do not necessarily know the “modern” issues surrounding gender equality. This problem is illustrated by studies by the World Bank (2012) and the Overseas Development Institute (2014), which show that change in norms is also caused by demographic change. On the other hand, Sweden has a rather low score for Hofstede et al.’s (2010) Uncertainty Avoidance dimension. This can be seen very well in their versatile family models. The Swiss University Hospital mentioned that the family structure in Sweden is quite different from that in Switzerland. Ericsson also said that parental leave, for example, is much fairer in Sweden than in Switzerland. The authors of this study see these differences not due to the fact that Sweden has always been more progressive than Switzerland, but rather to the fact that a change in the family structure has taken place in recent decades and that Sweden has been able to change more quickly due to its relatively relaxed attitude towards new things and deviations from earlier standards. Switzerland, for its part, may still be stuck in the midst of change, as new things are met with more scepticism. In addition, the Co-Head of Organizational Development of the government-owned Swiss company, which is of Dutch origin, said that Switzerland places more value on hierarchies than Scandinavian countries, in which hierarchies are handled and perceived significantly differently. This is in line with
the findings of Hofstede et al. (2010), according to which Switzerland has a slightly higher Power Distance and thus hierarchies are more important. Hofstede et al.’s (2010) most obvious differences between Swedish and Swiss culture are in the dimension Masculinity. Sweden has an extremely low score, which means that Swedish companies tend to represent feminine values. Equality is practically rooted in culture. The statement of the Swedish trading company reflects this very well: It should not be a matter of whether the man or the woman brings up the children, but rather a joint project, where both partners have equal share and the same opportunity for personal development.

According to Chichilnisky (2008), it would be better in today’s rational economy if gender were treated equally. The distribution that women tend to work in the household is historically determined. In the past, men earned significantly more than women, which led to men going to work and women staying at home (Chichilnisky, 2018). Ericsson addressed precisely this historical fact. Many years ago women were not expected to do physical work and that is why men did this work. Meanwhile, many works are no longer so physical and therefore the historical considerations of the past are no longer true. The equalization of these wage differences should therefore take place, so that it is worthwhile, for example, in the case of the birth of a child, to take over the care of both the woman and the man equally. This is one of the reasons why Bertrand and Hallock (2001) complain in their article that there is a lack of women in management positions. A quota of women in companies could eradicate such inequalities. However, Ericsson mentioned in the interview that they do not want to promote a woman who may be less qualified just to meet a quota. The Swiss government-owned company, on the other hand, sees a quota of women as the most important means of combating inequalities. Here it may well be that this difference results from the fact that one company is private and the other belongs to the state. However, Bertrand and Hallock (2001) also point out that the lack of women in top corporate positions may be due to the lack of women’s long-term career commitment. In our opinion, this is also related to the fact that the majority of women still take care of children and work in the household. This automatically leads to the consideration of why a higher education should be done at all.

For companies with international operations, it is important to take into account the various cultures of different countries. According to Laurent (1986), management approaches have long been transferred from the country of headquarters abroad and have been considered universally valid. Ericsson contradicts this observation by Laurent (1986). Although standards are adopted from the head office in Sweden, they are adapted to the respective circumstances in the respective country. The Swedish trading company, on the other hand, is trying to adopt its Swedish values in its Swiss subsidiary and is thus focusing on their humanist approach. Therefore, there seem to be several approaches on how to proceed. For very advanced countries like Sweden, it can certainly make sense to “export” existing management methods to new countries. In the theory, Briscoe and Schuler (2004) describe that companies can transfer their corporate culture from their home market to a foreign country, but
nevertheless the influence of the national culture of this country plays an important role. This theory has been partly confirmed by the Swedish Trade company, however its business in Japan has managed to bring a change in society and thus in the culture, so that gender equality has become more and more important.

The state-owned international Swiss company has stated that from its subjective point of view, the national culture has a huge influence on the companies and their behaviour. BLS has also noted that the culture is crucial as to whether and how well measures can be implemented in practice. Companies and above all politicians must promote supportive standards and try to promote corresponding cultures that is the be-all and end-all, according to BLS. Rao et al. (2016) mention similar aspects in their book. Standards are often invisible and are therefore automatically regarded as normal. All these statements support the findings of vom Brocke and Sinnl (2011) that national cultures have a greater impact on people than the effective corporate culture and therefore politicians must set appropriate guidance in the right direction.

In the opinion of the authors of this thesis, this could not completely change cultures in the short to medium term, but it would create a framework within which companies would have to operate. In the long term, such established standards can become the norm and a cultural change can take place. Moreover, according to Ericsson, this cultural change is necessary to achieve 100% gender equality in a company.

5.2 Rules & Policies

As Rao et al. (2016) has noted, many companies have begun to develop gender equality strategies in recent years. After all, they do not want to be outnumbered in the labour market and before the law. All companies surveyed in this work are aware of the problems of gender equality and the development of framework components of same-gender objectives is an active component of the management strategy. In addition, companies are incorporating more and more points into their gender equality policies, thereby revising existing guidelines and rules. The Swedish trade company is setting a good example and, in addition to the already advantageous option for parents to take leave up to one year after the birth of a child, now also offers couples who work in the company the opportunity to share a job. The authors of this work recognize that companies want to come up with something to take the implementation of the guidelines to heart. These innovative approaches are perceived and increasingly copied in industry. The opinion of the authors of this work is precisely one of the most important points. As long as society is guided by its traditional values, companies must create incentives so that the basis is sufficiently broad and employees can take advantage of the opportunities available. However, unfortunately the companies that want to use these resources are still in the minority.

According to the Federal Office for Gender Equality FOGE (2017), there are still companies in which the management levels that take the time to implement the existing policies and do not attach too much importance to gender equality.
However, the efforts of the HR people interviewed for this study are clear. There are various factors that are decisive for assessing the differences between management orientation and implementation in HR. One of the difficulties for typical male companies such as BLS or Ericsson is to implement policies from theory into practice. It is quite possible that companies do not yet have a developed policy. BLS is currently still relying on its human resources department to adhere to the corporate principles of a fair, transparent and exemplary employer. However, according to the authors of this work, this trust is not strong enough. They think it would be better to create a basis for the foundations and to write this down in a policy. Especially in companies that are strongly influenced by typical male professions, it is all the more important that the company is perceived as a highly attractive employer compared to the few graduates of these professions. For example, the Head of HR mentions that Ericsson is more confronted with the problem that there are simply too few qualified women applying for a job in the company. The market for female technical employees is very small, so that the top women who want to make a career often go to the top competitors. From the perspective of the authors of this dissertation, this reputation can only be achieved if the company stands out from the crowd. This requires policies of gender equality policies and a control and contact point. To achieve this, companies must follow the four-step process mentioned by Mazur (2017). Starting with the identification of the problem, in this specific case that there are not enough female employees in the professional field of the respective companies, the companies must consider measures to improve the situation when aligning their policy. The subsequent monitoring of whether the mechanism is suitable or whether further measures need to be taken leads to continuous improvement of the process.

It is also about the effect of policies on the various individuals. Especially in management floors, in which a small percentage of women can be found anyway, a successor of the same gender is often preferred and the election is not completely open. Following the example of the Swedish trading company, this should be open to everyone, i.e. no active promotion, but every interested person must register on their own initiative. This also leads to more interest and a broader opportunity within a team, as the employees can actively participate in the company policy and make a contribution to further development. The university hospital is also aware of this fact and is constantly looking for suitable women in succession planning for senior positions.

Hence, in the opinion of the authors of this work, the identification of the problem must also be recorded more comprehensively at the top of the management levels of a company. Like Connell (2009), they believe that an organization represents a wide context of gender relations and that optimal efficiency can only be achieved if the processes from the gender policies are recorded in all areas. It is therefore important that those responsible for implementing the policies drawn up are also in contact with the top management. In the government-owned Swiss company, the Co-Head of the Organizational Development speaks of active cooperation with the management and
repeatedly brings in points that lead to an improvement in the current situation. As a result, HRM is an extended and integrated part of the corporate strategy and should thus contribute to the implementation of the policies. However, the authors of this work also believe that this is still the case for too few companies and that it should be given more attention. This is because top management does not regard the measurement of importance as central or strategy-relevant because the effective increase in productivity cannot be measured. In addition, according to the employees of the university hospital and the government-owned Swiss company, many management positions are occupied by older generations, which makes it even more difficult to change established behaviour.

This also has a lot to do with raising awareness, and it is important that the perception of typical women’s and men’s occupations in society must be changed if something is to change here. Among other things, women’s networks must be strengthened and a link established between the aforementioned generations and classes (Meyer & Prugl, 1999). This support starts on a small scale. The diversity manager of the Swiss university hospital sees it as her task to ensure the implementation of the policy at all levels. If the chocolate bunnies are represented in typical role models in their own kitchen at Easter, misconduct is already present here for optimal equality. Information brochures or company advertisements often contain stereotypical features that those responsible are not even aware of. If the university hospital would work with more diversity and makes adjustments in both directions, the perceptive behaviour of a country’s population will soon change. However, this behaviour must not only be applied in these areas of responsibility, but must be conscious at all levels. This means that the guidelines must also be observed at all management stages.

The implementation of the imposed guidelines and rules should not only be lived internally but also externally and should be understood as part of the responsibility of a company. This role model function becomes clear in the two Swedish companies interviewed. Ericsson has a relevant Business Code of Ethics that includes gender equality. This must be signed by all business partners, whether suppliers or end customers. If one party does not comply, Ericsson will renegotiate the cooperation and terminate it if necessary. The second Swedish company has already influenced its behaviour to such an extent that its internationalisation into Japan has had a considerable impact on society. New employee models are also being developed in Switzerland in order to secure competition and thus a sustainable reputation. For example, the Co-Head of Organizational Development of the government-owned Swiss company repeatedly calls on its management to play an active role in politics and to point out to the policies of the company that for the necessary change in the company there must also be a change in society.
5.3 Resources, Capabilities & Consciousness

Awareness of the fact that gender equality affects everyone is a key issue when it comes to strengthening the implementation of the policies drawn up. Rao et al. (2016) also mentions this when they state that every individual must be aware of his or her rights and make an active contribution to changing the current situation. Also in the interviews with the different companies it became clear that still much must be invested into the attitude of the persons within companies. While Ericsson has a flexible policy and wants to leave many options open to employees regarding the working model, many decision-makers are still afraid of supporting a pregnant woman, as experience shows that after childbirth the employee only comes to work at a reduced rate or not at all. This is where the gender quality action learning procedure comes in, which promotes awareness of putting aside typical stereotypical ideas (Ghuznavi, 2008). The Co-Head of Organizational Development of the government-owned Swiss company also appeals to this basic attitude of the Swiss in general that past events lead to a prejudiced attitude towards fellow human beings. The authors of this work find that these training procedures must be necessary in the further training of the social competences of each individual employee, so that the perception of these gender role models can be changed and thus a better implementation of the policies can take place. They are supported in particular by the exemplary Swedish trading company, which lives special training for unconscious prejudices within the organisation and demands this for all companies. Switzerland’s social structures continue to be strongly influenced by traditional images and values. As a result, many employees, especially female employees, miss the boat and are unable to re-enter the process despite the company’s existing policies. In the university hospital, too, this is often the case with the support of women and they try to cushion this vessel with an extended range of services for families. Although this may work the longer the more at the grassroots level, management’s awareness has still not been fully awakened. The fact that a woman was also sought during the application process for a chief physician position and this has not only met with understanding shows that much still needs to be invested in the learning process.

This learning process has progressed further at the large government-owned Swiss company and ensures a larger proportion of female employees in top management. In the view of the Co-Head, a time-limited, politically controlled quota is needed to relieve the resources to be used in a company. She receives theoretical support from Ghuznavi (2008), who demands more women in management positions in the action learning process. Even as an advocate for an unlimited quota, the HR managers of the university hospital argue that this is the only way to bring about a generation change. Even though some men would feel disadvantaged, in their opinion it is of the utmost importance that this awareness can be controlled so centrally. Interestingly, the company that is furthest in the implementation of the policy foregoes such quotas. As already mentioned, the Swedish trading company has no automatic promotions of employees. They have to apply independently and grow into the role. According to the BLS and the University Hospital, women are generally less self-
confident and sometimes sell themselves below their value, they demand not only lower wages but also fewer opportunities to take on responsibilities. In addition, they often see themselves in the role of the main person responsible for the upbringing of children and the organisation of the household. Here the diversity manager believes that all persons in the company must see themselves in the responsibility to push the women and to better present the opportunities to grow into new roles. She believes that it is not just a matter for men or women, but a common goal. It is important that within the framework of these trainings and this learning process an awareness arises that the employees are people and not necessarily women and men. This is the Swedish value of living together.

After the interviews, the authors of this work agree that a quota on the Swiss labour market would not produce the desired results. On the one hand, because there are simply too few women employees who would be interested in certain positions, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, it is often impossible to include enough women in the application process for very technical occupations, because there are simply too few. On the other hand, there is a new form of discrimination, which today is not completely out of the question for men in other areas. For example, there is still some catching up to be done in the area of maternity and parental leave. Although there are clear theories on this topic in the literature, very few companies interviewed deal with this point (Rao et al., 2016). The Swedish trading company in particular has extended paternity leave. In the remaining companies, employees must either take unpaid leave or waive it altogether. In order to give greater weight to this consciousness and to bring more women into management without quotas, the gender quality action learning process must take effect much earlier and the attitude towards typical role models must be developed much earlier (Ghuznavi, 2008).

But exactly this learning process demands a lot of resources from the companies involved, in addition to the financial resources, which must inevitably be increased by all measures, these companies also tie up capacities, which are needed for non-operational expenses. According to the definition of Rao et al. (2016), these resources must be used for the control mechanisms of the policies in addition to the creation of policies. Most of the companies interviewed are aware of this topic and create new areas such as integration and diversity departments, which are usually subordinated to human resources management.

In conclusion, the authors of this thesis can say that the expansion of consciousness must take place among all members of companies and that they must be aware of the Swiss culture and can thus initiate an active learning process to change long-established patterns. Only in this way will companies be able to fully implement their good and lawful policies and thus contribute to real gender equality.
6 Conclusion

In this last chapter, the findings of the analysis are used to answer the research question introduced in chapter one. Theoretical and practical consequences for companies and policy makers are then demonstrated in a next step. Finally, the study will be concluded with limitations of the thesis and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Disclosure of the research question

In a world where companies must achieve the maximum for all involved, it is clear that inefficiencies have no place. The fact that gender inequality prevents an economy from achieving maximum production potential and thus constitutes an obstacle to economic growth shows the importance of this issue. The literature shows that a country's organisational culture, and in particular its national culture, has an influence on gender equality in companies. Gender equality is often controlled by corporate policies to ensure compliance with local laws. It is therefore important for policy makers and employees involved to understand the impact of national culture on the implementation of such an equality policy in companies. The aim of this work was therefore to answer the research question mentioned under 1.3 (page 6): What influence does Switzerland's national culture have on the implementation of gender equality policy in domestic companies and companies that are internationalising in Switzerland?

The empirical results show that national and international companies are equally concerned with the issue of gender equality. National culture, social norms and structures have an immense influence on companies. Women in these companies feel some pressure to be responsible for their families. This pressure does not necessarily have to come from the company, but rather from the social environment. The circle of friends and the family are therefore important drivers for the development of long-term professional commitment. Through guidelines and rules, companies try to reduce the above-mentioned pressure on women and ensure that they comply with Swiss law. However, stereotypes, values and norms, all parts of the national culture that prevail in the population, cannot be changed by such a policy. In addition, it is difficult in practice to monitor compliance with corporate policy. The existing guidelines are communicated in various ways. In some companies, a separate agreement must be signed by each employee, in others the policy is part of a collective employment agreement. This shows that in some cases there is no awareness among employees, as such an important policy can be lost in a collective employment agreement. Separate agreements are more likely to be read by employees and thus consciously perceived. This simplifies implementation and actual compliance in day-to-day business. Differences in policy between Swedish and Swiss companies can also be seen. The culture of the parent company of the companies also shapes the culture of the subsidiary and attempts are often made to introduce uniform regulations worldwide. How well these regulations can be adopted by the subsidiaries depends largely on their financial resources and capabilities. The
greater the resources and skills, the more innovations are made to reduce the influence of culture to a minimum and to bring about a rethink in society.

The Swiss national culture thus influences the implementation of gender equality policy in Swiss companies to the extent that integration is made more difficult by old-fashioned and traditional thinking and by the characteristic of the Swiss population that changes are met with scepticism. The same applies to Swedish companies that have become internationalised in Switzerland. However, it should be noted that the deployment of managers of the parent company from abroad can have a positive influence on the implementation of the gender equality policy. Nevertheless, Swiss culture continues to influence the mindset of most Swiss employees, even in foreign companies. A Swedish company may try to introduce part of the parent company's organisational culture, but this will inevitably be overshadowed by the norms and values of its employees, which in turn are influenced by the Swiss national culture, and will therefore take longer to implement. Switzerland has shown that it will make social adjustments to renewals, but more slowly and steadily than other countries, as the introduction of women's voting rights has also shown. But this probably also provides for more stability and a deeper anchoring in the culture.

“Some rules are nothing but old habits that people are afraid to change”
(Therese Anne Fowler)

6.2 Theoretical implications

Although many studies on gender equality have already been written and this is omnipresent in many research projects, the authors of this dissertation noted at the beginning that many of these studies do not correspond to current circumstances and do not take sufficient account of the cultural factors from Sweden and Switzerland. They have therefore decided to investigate this cultural factor influencing the implementation of gender equality policies within companies based in Switzerland. Adhering to such policies often involves a great deal of effort for companies, i.e. binding resources, especially in the area of human resources. The results of this research can contribute in particular to how companies deal with the fact that culture in a country has a large influence on the implementation of internal company policies. Especially when it comes to socio-structural and social competences, it is often difficult to achieve a goal only with specifications. Companies must therefore make resources available that offer the possibility of developing personnel and expanding individual social competence through a learning process.

Many existing studies focus primarily on the creation and development of policies and then leave it to the fact that a recorded policy provides the necessary basis. This basis is of course central, but not sufficient for further use within an organization. Here, in addition to the theoretical and written basis, the will to implement it is also required. As this is not self-evident for the existing culture, additional resources are
needed to support this implementation. According to this study, more and more companies are coming to the conclusion that they need to invest more resources in order to be an attractive employer. They form strategies how they want to approach this in practice and create additional places on paper to monitor and implement the implementation. This creates additional functions within HR such as Diversity or Inclusion Manager.

6.3 Practical implications

The issue of equal treatment between the two genders is, as has already emerged several times in this work, of central importance nowadays. There must and should be no more discrimination and equal opportunities for all should be kept at the same level. This requires a rethinking of certain cultural patterns within a society that ultimately leads to a matter of course within the company. Currently, companies with innovative behaviour and a modern policy can achieve a great competitive advantage by positioning themselves as progressive employees. This attracts the best people and enables them to make their business operations more successful. In this paper it is shown that most of the policies are available in the companies and that there are efforts to be a progressive employer. Nevertheless, this thinking often only takes place in the area of human resources and does not make the leap into all areas. The authors of this work suggest that the expansion of consciousness in all areas can be achieved through a learning process. The aim is to train the various individuals in a targeted manner and to gain a thorough understanding of the facts and the problem at hand. In doing so, they will determine what influence a diverse workforce will have on the operational activities of the company and what advantages they can also derive for themselves. Through this acquired knowledge and understanding, it is also easier to adapt a society to political aspirations and to achieve a rethinking. This is the only way to fully implement a policy. With their results, the authors of this work hope to generate a benefit for companies in Switzerland with which management people in particular can identify and find the necessary resources for the required training in their companies. They also hope that further research in this area can be taken up and that an even better understanding of the topic can be developed. Only in this way can the overriding goal of equality between the two genders be achieved.

6.4 Limitations

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, it was important to the authors to maintain the highest possible level of trustworthiness. In order to achieve this, the authors have tried to show each step in the methodology openly so that the reader has a clear idea of how this thesis was structured. Nevertheless, the authors are aware that there are limitations. The purpose of this thesis was to find out how Swiss national culture influences the implementation of gender equality policies in Swiss companies as well as in companies.
To answer the research question posed at the beginning of this thesis, the authors used primary and secondary data. It is clear that more interviews with more companies would also lead to clearer conclusions. More precise results could also have been achieved with more secondary data, such as internal policies or more scientific articles. In addition, the companies surveyed are from different industries. This can lead to industry-specific unicums having an influence on the interviewee’s answers to the questions. Last but not least, the data were only obtained from Swiss and Swedish companies. It is therefore not possible to apply the results to other countries, as each country’s culture is truly unique.

6.5 Future research

This work addresses the research gap on the influence of Swiss culture on the implementation of enterprise policies in the field of equal treatment of women and men. Within the chapter on empirical data and the subsequent analysis, several topics have emerged which could be of interest for further research purposes and could thus make a valuable contribution to further achieving gender equality. This has been identified as follows:

- The authors of this work have shown that training and education of individuals within an organisation could raise awareness of the problem. How these trainings should look like and what points they contain in order to optimally reflect the national culture would certainly be an interesting topic for further research.

- The need to provide resources, specifically in the human resources area, is a central requirement of this work and helps the entire process to be more effective in implementation. How these resources could be optimally used and what this should look like would be suitable for further research.

- A greater diversity often promises an increase in the operational activity: How could this be assessed and what influence does a diverse team have on the final result of a company? The authors of the thesis were not able to deal with this question for frame-technical reasons, but recommend to take it up later research and to deal with it more specifically.

- Although Switzerland’s pace of change is somewhat slower, this is precisely the opportunity for future researchers to investigate this process of change and to examine how society adapts to new processes. Thus the country and its culture will also adapt to the gender equality process, albeit over several generations. This is where further research can be continued.
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4. Swiss University Hospital, Manager of Diversity, face-to-face interview [conducted 17. April 2018]
5. Swiss University Hospital, Teamleader of HR, telephone interview [conducted 16. April 2018]

7.2 Literature


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7.3 Tables and figures

Table 1: Six Dimensions according to Hofstede Insights (2018)  
Table 2: Interviewees and case companies  
Table 3: Operationalisation

Figure 1: Own figure with data gathered from Hofstede Insights (2018)  
Figure 2: Theoretical synthesis
Appendices

Appendix A Questionnaire

**Business Operations (Capabilities & Consciousness)**

1. Do you want to remain anonymous?
2. What is your position in the company?
3. Have you ever visited a Nordic country (e.g. Sweden, Iceland, etc.)?
   If so, have you noticed differences in the culture of this country and Switzerland?
4. How do you assess gender equality in your company as a whole?
5. What is the distribution of men and women in management positions in your company today?

**Internationalisation**

6. Do you adapt your gender equality policies and measures to the country in which you operate in order to internationalise your business activities? For example, when expanding into a country where less stringent regulations apply.
7. What was the most visible difference in gender equality in the internationalisation of your company from Sweden to Switzerland?

**Culture (Social norms & Structure)**

8. What influence do you think national culture has on gender equality in a country?
   a. Which cultural characteristics have the greatest influence?
9. How would you describe the norms and values of role allocation in Swiss households?
10. Do you think the father should play a more important role when it comes to the family structure?

**Gender equality in detail (Rules & Policies)**

11. What includes the equality policy in your company?
12. How strictly does your company adhere to the implementation of gender equality in Swiss law?
13. What are the general challenges Swiss companies face in implementing gender equality? (E.g. difference in pay, paternity leave, part-time work, glass cover for promotions, etc.)
14. What do you think are the reasons for the wage gap that still exists in Switzerland?
   a. How does your company deal with these challenges?

15. What are the discrepancies between the equality policy and its implementation in your company’s day-to-day business?
   a. What can be improved in the process of gender equality in your company?
      What are the company’s other plans to resolve gender inequalities?

16. Are there enough women in your company who want to climb the career ladder?

17. What do you think about part-time jobs / job sharing?

Economic situation
18. Are there any advantages or disadvantages of the equality policy for new hires or (development) promotion measures in your company?

19. How do equally qualified women perform compared to men in the team?

20. What do you think are the biggest challenges for women in the work place?

21. How do you deal with the cultural differences of your parent company within the business environment in Switzerland? (only for Swedish companies)

Concluding questions
22. Do you believe that 100% gender equality would be possible in a company, although the national culture does not make this clear?

23. In your opinion, how could 100% gender equality be implemented in a company?
   a. How would this affect the business of your company? (E.g. culture, efficiency, profitability etc.)
   b. What is the most important measure for you when it comes to gender equality?