



Name: Prof. Dr. Evelyn Korn

Academic Career:

- 1988 Abitur
- 1994 Diplom in Mathematics, Dortmund
- 1999 Ph.D. in Economics, Dortmund
- 2004 Habilitation in Business Administration, Tübingen
- Since 2004 Full Professor of Economics (in particular Microeconomics), Marburg

Career

My first degree was a Diplom in Mathematics where my minor was economics, in particular microeconomics. I started with mathematics because I had fallen in love with the aesthetics of calculus as a means to describe the world which I had seen in my physics classes at high school. During my last two undergraduate years I “discovered” that human interactions can also be described and – if only to a small extent – understood by these means. Because I wanted to learn more about the structure of human interactions, I started a Ph.D. at the Chair of Microeconomics. After a difficult first year – which I spent on a project I did not like – I found the field and research question that fascinated me (and still does): family economics.

Although it is still not a main-stream field in economics and I still get asked why I don't turn to “something serious”, I am convinced that to understand how families work and which institutions help our children to develop into productive, functional (and happy) adults is one of the pivotal issues for the economic development of all societies.

Yet, at the end of my PhD I was not convinced that I would find a long-term employment if I stayed with this topic. Alienated by comments of my colleagues and uncertain if I would be able to compete, I started to apply for jobs in the management of science. However, during the application procedures I recognised that I wanted to spend my time with learning myself and not (at least not exclusively) with providing a working environment for others that enabled them to learn. Therefore, I stayed in academia but turned to another important application of microeconomics and started a Habilitation in accounting.

As I preferred a broader application of microeconomic theory (which I recognised during my years in accounting), I was happy when a position as a Full Professor was offered in Marburg that has been based in microeconomics but has been designed to start collaborations with a focus in business administration. I have held this position since 2004. My current (late 2010) research focus is again in family economics and social policy but I also participate in projects that are connected to my roots in accounting. Working on both fields means that I will probably not be able to attract international attention as you need to be highly active on a specialised field for that. However, I enjoy to learn – or to put it more scientific to gain insights – in different fields, which is basically the thread through my academic life.

Work and life balance

My son was born halfway through my Habilitation. At that time I was – unlike in my PhD years – already convinced that I am a competent researcher such that I found a good balance between working and spending time with the child and household chores. In addition, I was still flexible with respect to daily routines – as I was not tenured faculty, I did not have to attend faculty meetings and follow other duties that entail a fixed time schedule. In this respect I think that an academic career – at least in Social Sciences where no lab work is necessary – is perfectly reconcilable with starting a family.

My husband provided the most important support; both of us went on parental leave and we shared that part of household work that was not outsourced to market providers (we dissaved to a considerable extent at that time). In addition, he always supported me when I was confronted with other people – mainly women – who were convinced that I was inflicting harm on my child by being a full-time working Mum.

Suggestions

As I said before, in my view an academic career is well reconcilable with starting a family as it allows for much more flexibility than any other occupation following a higher education. Yet, the main reason to be an academic should be scientific curiosity – good working conditions are a constraint for occupational choices and not the objective function.

Trust yourself! The guys also just put their pants on one leg at a time.