

To Achieve Gender Equality in Organisations: A Swedish Case on an Important Aspect of Educational Leadership

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Abstract

Sweden, as a country based on extremely high secular and self-expression values, serve as an example that somewhat differ from other countries internationally, when it comes to educational leadership curriculum. The chapter takes its starting point at the governmental decision for Swedish universities to gender-mainstream their organisations, something that affects the educational leadership curriculum. To be able to discuss this, I present three research studies on gendering leader identity development processes and gender equality strategies in the Swedish higher education setting. In a longitudinal study of the process of leader identity development, the main result was the emergence of a gendering process in the discourse on academic leadership. At the end of the leadership assignment period, leader identity was described in differing terms at subject positions held by women and men, respectively. In a separate study on female heads of research-heavy departments, three conflicting subject positions appeared that showed different strategies when leaders were of the female sex: (a) a gender-conscious position, (b) a gender-neutral or gender-unconscious position and (c) a position of sex discrimination experience. In a third, large national study, based on horizontal analysis of gender equality in Swedish higher education institutions (HEIs), was found that universities internally consist of different worlds when it comes to the possibility of making academic careers and in how male and female-dominated academic disciplines explain gender inequality and strategies to handle this. Results from these studies will be discussed, in light of the striving for (gender) equal and just organisations, since gender equality is an important aspect of Swedish educational leadership curriculum.

Keywords: Higher education; gender equality; leader identity; head of department; academic career; disciplines

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