

## **Silander, Charlotte (2010). Pyramider och pipelines. Om högskolesystemets påverkan på jämställdhet i högskolan [Pyramides and Pipelines: The System of Higher Education and Its Effect on Gender Equality]. Linnaeus University Dissertations No 1/2010**

Research on gender equality in Swedish Higher Education (HE) shows an unequal gender balance. Women are consistently underrepresented at the highest levels of the academic hierarchy. The lack of gender equality in Academia has been illustrated by metaphors such as a narrowing pyramid, a leaky pipeline and a black hole. Unlike other problems in the academic context, gender inequality in HE is seldom considered from a systems perspective. The system of HE has undergone major changes during the 1990's in terms of scope (more students, more faculty, more institutions, etc.), differentiation (inclusion of new disciplines), and geographical distribution (establishing institutions in previously unserved areas). In this thesis, theoretical expectations concerning the effect of these changes on gender equality are developed. The thesis investigates gender equality in HE by developing an analytical framework to analyze the systems level and its impact on gender equality.

The empirical data consists of two sets. The first set contains cross-sectional data on registered undergraduate students, doctoral entrants, doctors, research fellows, senior lecturers and professors in Swedish HE. The second set is derived from the longitudinal integration database for health insurance and labor market studies (LISA), which consists of anonymized data on all individuals in the Swedish labor market, in this case we were interested in those holding a doctoral degree.

The main finding is that the system of HE does have an impact on the gender equality in HE. The vertical gender balance has increased during the expansion of Swedish HE during the 1990's. The horizontal gender balance has also increased, but the increase is limited to the undergraduate student category. On the other hand, the system of HE has not had an impact on the gender equality measured in terms of exits from Academia. Instead, it is demonstrated that the rate of men leaving Academia is higher than the corresponding rate of women, and that commonly used metaphors portraying Academia as a narrowing pyramid, a leaky pipeline or a black hole serve poorly as illustrations of the gender equality in Academia.

Keywords: gender equality, higher education, educational reform, gender balance, educational systems, gender differences, exit.

The dissertation *Pyramides and pipelines* was preceded by a licentiate thesis, in which the concept 'gender balance' was introduced and applied to an analysis of national statistics on gender balance: Silander, C. (2005) Högskolesystemet och könsbalansen – en studie om jämställdhet i den svenska högskolan [Gender balance in higher education]. Växjö University, Department of Social Sciences.