

Akava Works

Summary of
Akava Works report:

Gender distribution within higher education administration (vol. 2)

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Summary

The study examined the gender distribution in higher education administration at all Finnish higher education institutions, which includes a total of 13 universities and 24 universities of applied sciences. The research data was collected from public sources in June–August 2024. The study considered administration as including the boards of higher education institutions, the rectorate and deans and vice deans of the university faculties, as well as the management at universities of applied sciences.

The gender distribution was examined on a two-fold basis that was based on distributions in the data. This report examined universities first and then universities of applied sciences and, finally, analysed the gender distribution of both. The study is a follow-up study to Akava Works' original study on gender distribution in higher education administration that was carried out in 2020.

In Finland, women are generally strongly represented in the field of education, both as personnel and students, but the upper management of higher education institutions is predominantly male. In both universities and universities of applied sciences, men hold a majority of between 55 and 58 percent of board positions. The position of rector is the most gendered task at both universities and universities of applied sciences: men represent 85 per cent of rectors at universities and 71 per cent at universities of applied sciences. In universities, the positions of vice rector and dean are also strongly gendered: 57 per cent of vice rectors and 64 per cent of deans are male. At other levels of administration, gender distribution is more even: the positions of vice dean at universities and vice rector at universities of applied sciences have a slightly higher percentage of women (53%) but were overall relatively even in terms of gender distribution. At universities of applied sciences, the management teams are clearly female dominated with 60 per cent of their members being women.

There have been some changes in the distribution since 2020. The main observation is that the position of university rector has become more male-dominated, and the rector of universities of applied sciences has become slightly more equal in terms of gender distribution. There has been some development in terms of the equality of university boards, but the gender distribution of the boards of universities of applied sciences has largely remained the same as in 2020. In general, universities show a stronger gender distribution in favour of men than universities of applied sciences.

Although women have gained more power within the administration of both universities and universities of applied sciences when compared to the results of 2020, the upper management is still strongly male-dominated, which constitutes a significant gender equality problem in Finnish higher education institutions. The study examined, with the help of literature, the causes and consequences of gender equality and their links to broader social developments. The study also considered ways in which gender equality and the career development of women could be supported in higher education administration.