Women in Higher Education and Research in Finland
Two steps forward, one step back

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The big picture

- Official statistics
  - Look good for Finnish women
    - Women’s position 2nd best in the world (after Iceland), all Nordic countries in top positions (World Economic Forum)
      - The gap between the two genders smallest in terms of education and health less so in economic terms
    - In the academia
      - The female professor’s Euro is worth 96 cents (the average for women is 86.4 cents)
However,

- A Nordic study shows that
  - Gender segregation in academia very prominent
    - The Nordic research community clearly male-dominated at the higher levels
    - Overall, nearly 80% of professors are male in the Nordic countries
    - In Finland, currently the share of female professors is about 25%
        - Examples
          - At the Technical University of Tampere 94% of professors are male and only 6% women
          - At the University of Tampere – "my university", the share of women professors is 38%
Segregation between fields – what do the student populations look like?

- Why such a big difference between two universities in the same city?
  - Engineering fields – overwhelmingly male-dominated
  - Information sciences – more men than women
  - Medicine and life sciences – a good gender balance
  - Humanities, social sciences, education – female-dominated
Entrance to Higher Education

- OECD Survey

All European OECD countries covered by the analysis, coming from a higher educated family (i.e. a father with a tertiary degree) increases the probability of achieving tertiary education relative to having a medium parental educational background.

Mobility in earnings, wages and education across generations is relatively low in France, southern European countries, the United Kingdom and the United States. By contrast, such mobility tends to be higher in Australia, Canada and the Nordic countries.
Is gender balance a norm now?

- One female president does not guarantee that there will be a second one
- One hole in the glass ceiling
  - can make us complacent
  - may lead us to think that the problem is solved
- We still need to appoint both male and female candidates for different positions and monitor the results
“Men think that women are equal” - Gender balance in Finland

- One female president of the country does not have a long-term effect
- One female rector or professor in natural sciences does not change the situation
  - Hard competition in academia favours men
  - Women carry the responsibility for childcare
- Men appoint men (unawareness of hidden motives)
- Gender balance is not yet reality
  - Equality improves and weakens in waves
  - The current mood in Finland does not contribute to equality
  - Leading politicians are male and women politicians play a minor role, eg in ministerial roles - “quota women”
What is competence?

In our collective mindsets we tend to think that

- after affirmative action has highlighted inequality and women have been appointed to high positions, we can now go back to the old competence criteria
- we can now appoint men freely, because in previous cases women got the jobs because of affirmative action not because they were more competent
- We can soon get back to business as usual
Should equality still be a criterion and is competence a clearly definable criterion?

- Yes
  - Equality does not disappear as a criterion when more women are appointed to top positions

- Can competence be defined in absolute terms?
- No
  - There is more than one road to competence
  - Women’s career structures are different from those of men
Do the same criteria make men and women equal as job applicants?

- Partly true
  - but biological factors and societal pressures make career moves and their timing different
  - Competence criteria need to be relativized to a degree
- Competence criteria are already often age- or experience-related but they also need to be gender-related
Systemic issues in the academia

- Marginalization starts early
  - In top research jobs
  - Women’s careers start later and this is often reflected in their position and salaries throughout their working lives
- There is still too little support for women to encourage them to seek leadership positions
- There are too few women’s networks to promote women in the academia
Systemic issues in the academia

- It is claimed that women have equal opportunities but they are not capable of utilizing them.
- Recruitment processes often recognize the need to promote equal opportunity but make it impossible in practice.
All male panel discussing “female dominance in Danish literature” on the TV show. From http://allmalepanels.tumblr.com