

Gender Pay Equity Reviews in Australian and Swedish Universities: Are They an Impetus for Change?

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Abstract

Studies worldwide have found that women's pay lags behind men's in academia and women are underrepresented at the top of universities. This is the situation in Sweden and Australia, the two countries under examination in this paper. Gender pay equity reviews are compared at four universities: two in Australia and two in Sweden. This paper also explores the strategies these universities use to reduce gender inequities. The two countries have different types of legislation to implement pay equity reviews. Sweden's legislation requires mandatory pay analyses and wage remediation; whereas, Australia has voluntary pay equity audits with no wage remediation. In terms of gender representation, Swedish universities are more balanced across all levels except for the professorial level, which remains dominated by men. Australian universities have fewer female associate professors, professors, and senior managers. The paper concludes that, despite the regulation of salary scales in the four universities, pay gaps persist due to historic and cultural factors. This underlines the need for a different approach, one which mobilises grassroots action and tangible executive support to dismantle any existing barriers and alter the subtexts related to recruitment and promotion.