

1 Beyond the Glass Ceiling-Finnish Women's Path to the Top 2 Leadership Positions

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6

7 **Abstract**

8 In Finland, women have advanced to top positions, and this positive development is the result
9 from a long legislative development and advances in attitudes. How has this development
10 happened and why? What kinds of obstacles women may face? How to bring women's
11 expertise forward? In this article, we discuss these questions. We highlight the importance of
12 courage to do the effort for the better society.

13

14 **Index terms**— female leaders, Finland, leadership, women.

15 Introduction n today's Finland, an increasing proportion of leaders and supervisors are women. The number
16 of employees working under the supervision of women is greater than in any other country in the European Union
17 (Paoli, 1997;Paoli & Merllié, 2001). Indeed, a surprisingly fast change has occurred in the equality development
18 of work life in Finland: women are taking over leadership roles even though they are still mainly possessed by
19 men (Lehto, 2009;Hyvärinen, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2015).

20 This article describes the development of Finnish women's position in the light of history and political decisions.
21 In addition, our purpose is to discuss how work life has changed and requires new kind of leadership practices.
22 Today, it is more and more important to support and encourage employees' development and help them use
23 their strengths. Also communalism has increased its importance in modern workplaces. This article is based
24 on Professor and Vicerector Kaarina Määttä's festive speech held in September 2017 at the graduation event
25 of the Executive Master of Business Administration (eMBA) program at the University of Lapland, Finland.
26 This twoyear-long program was targeted at experienced women who work as leaders or entrepreneurs at public
27 administration or private sector. The purpose was to combine academic research-based knowledge with wide
28 experience at leadership in practice.

29 Regardless of their good education and talent, women still have less leadership positions than men. Why? We
30 want to analyze why many women tend to underachieve and give up their career plans or pursuits of reaching a
31 top position. It is important to identify those factors that would strengthen women's expertise and power. Many
32 women working at the top leadership positions also act as models for other women showing how to enhance their
33 performances and work for not only themselves but eventually to the whole society. Today's work necessitates
34 creativity: courage to give up the old routines and create new solutions. When asking where to find this courage,
35 we expect to find the answer from strong women. Finland has numerous examples of women advancing to top
36 leaders and renewal work they have done. Let us introduce these milestones.

37 **1 II. The Development of Gender Equality in Finland**

38 In the past, Finnish women's education and career opportunities have followed certain steps. The history is
39 long, but changing positively. As mentioned, Finnish women hold the top record for leadership positions in the
40 EU. What happened? The following phases and decisions are probably the most essential ones for the Finnish
41 women's career development (Office of the Equality Ombudsman, 1996): These phases represent not only the
42 milestones of Finnish women advancing to top leadership positions but also milestones of how women's position
43 in Finland was improved in general too. In Finland, the number of women in leadership positions has been
44 steadily increasing since 1984 and today 40 % of all employees and 63 % of female employees have a woman as
45 their supervisor (Lehto & Sutela, 2008).

3 IV. WHY DO MANY TALENTED WOMEN HAVE

46 According to a report concerning EU countries, the proportions of employees working under female supervisors
47 have increased in almost every EU country since 1995 (Paoli, 1997;Paoli & Merllié, 2001). Only in Germany,
48 the proportion has remained at the same level (18 %). The growth has been the fastest in Belgium (from 16 to
49 25 %), although its score is still only average in Europe while the slowest growth has been in the new member
50 countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, and Slovakia (Lehto, 2009;Paoli, 1997;Paoli & Merllié, 2001).

51 2 III. Why to Recruit Women in Leadership

52 Positions?

53 Numerous changes have taken place in work life based on which leadership and supervision questions have
54 to be viewed in new perspectives (Perlow & Kelly, 2014). Women's input as leaders is needed increasingly
55 for the following reasons: 1. Team work has become more common and the traditional hierachical structure
56 in many fields has dissolved. This requires new kinds of leadership that provides encouragement, inspiration,
57 attention to emotions, and acknowledgment and feedback. 2. Many employees have new kinds of goals for
58 their careers: instead of advancing to higher positions, they pursue wider expertise in their current jobs. 3.
59 Women's educational level has increased considerably and faster than men's education. Finnish women stand
60 out in European comparisons as most educated women. Finland tops even the other Nordic Countries when
61 looking at women's educational levels. 4. According to Statistics Finland, women differ from men as leaders and
62 supervisors (see e.g., Lyly-Yrjänäinen & Fernández Macias, 2009). Female leaders have proved to be better than
63 men in giving feedback, encouragement, and support, acknowledging good performances, noticing emotions, and
64 especially in encouraging employees to study and develop in work. However, women and men did not seem to
65 have differences in their abilities to solve conflicts, share responsibilities, distribute information, expertise in work
66 tasks, or paying attention to older employees.

67 International research on employee or supervisor experiences of female or male leaders is scarce (Eagly &
68 Heilman, 2016). The general impression on the one hand does not support the fact that female leaders are more
69 and more common, and on the other hand creates stereotypical images of female leadership (Joshi, Son, & Roh,
70 2015; Kumra, 2014).

71 However, there are numerous theories about various leadership styles all the way from leadership trait theories
72 (Parry & Bryman, 1996) and leadership style theories (Northouse, 2013) to authentic leadership (Gill & Casa,
73 2015) (see Hyvärinen, 2016). When it comes to women and men's leadership styles, Eagly (2007) has connected the
74 transformational leadership style with women and the transactional style with men. Transformational leadership
75 is based the idea that true leadership makes followers work better through encouragement and support. This
76 kind of leadership enhances employees' intrinsic motivation. Transactional leadership has emphasis in control and
77 outrinsic motivational factors such as rewards from good performance and punishments from bad ones (Eagly,
78 2007). Black-and-white analyses of differences between women and men may however maintain stereotypes
79 (Vinkenburg, Van Engen, Early, & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2011).

80 Research shows that women still find it more difficult to combine work and family than men (van Steenbergen,
81 Ellemers, & Mooijaart, 2007). Women's solutions are interpreted differently than men's and the public discourse
82 about the relationship between a leader's work and family suggests that this is only a women's problem (Aranda
83 & Glick, 2014). A careeroriented woman's ability to take care of her family is often questioned and she can
84 be blamed for neglecting her family (Bosley, Arnold, & Cohen, 2009). When it comes to male leaders, these
85 discussions or analyses rarely take place.

86 Hopefully, the increase in the number of female leaders would spread understanding about the fact that the
87 successful combination of work and family does not so much have to do with gender but the spouses' ability to
88 compromise about career choices and agree with how duties are shared in the family (Uusiautti & Määttä, 2012).

89 3 IV. Why do Many Talented Women have

90 Difficulties in Advancing their Careers?

91 Talented women are often also those ones who have succeeded well at school, been nice and obedient. Those
92 women who have advanced to leadership positions do not feel too grateful for these features in their past. When
93 men's and women's experiences are compared, talent is interpreted differently (Festing, Komau, & Schäfer, 2014).

94 Good self-image and robust self-esteem are central factors for the development of talent and creativity. They
95 influence the development of talent in women in a very special manner (Robinson, Fetters, Riester, & Bracco,
96 2009). The self-esteem of girls who are known to be talented decreases especially during their adolescence. This
97 phenomenon is connected to girls' ability to notice conflicting expectations in their environment. As girls grow,
98 they become to realize that they are expected to possess the traditional female characteristics such as passiveness,
99 adjustment, sensitivity to others' expectations, and altruism, while at the same time, they are expected to perform
100 well and succeed (e.g., Combs & Luthans, 2007;Hyvärinen, 2016).

101 Contradictory expectations targeted to girls may lead to a situation where girls hide their talent and lose their
102 potential. They may be afraid to succeed or avoid it because they believe that competitiveness and success would
103 destroy their femininity or jeopardize their social relationships or acceptance by others (Duguid & Thomas-Hunt,
104 2015).

105 Similarly, perfectionism can hinder talent to come forward. When it is combined with responsibility and
106 scrupulousness, accomplishments never satisfy these women. Strong tendency to avoid mistakes alongside
107 perfectionism may also lead to underperforming (Corrie & Palmer, 2014).

108 4 V. How to Turn Obedient Girls into

109 Strong-Willed Women?

110 Based on our own studies and research review (e.g., O'Brien, Scheffer, Van Nes, & Van Der Lee, 2015), we
111 present five viewpoints or mottos to give better space to women's expertise, knowhow, and talent when pursuing
112 a better work life. To improve the current everyday life at work, the following general features are necessary for
113 female leaders: Women have to highlight their own expertise. When building functional and thriving living areas,
114 day care centers, schools, churches, offices, kitchens, apartments, houses, and enterprises, women should disclose
115 the knowledge they possess, they have obtained through education and everyday solutions (Ely & Meyerson,
116 2000). Female leadership and expertise become common resource only when women themselves trust in them to
117 be right (Castilla, 2016). Beyond the Glass Ceiling -Finnish Women's Path to the Top Leadership Positions

118 Certainly, girls' and women's individual differences are great and they also differ in their ways of facing gender-
119 specific expectations and pressures (Roth, Purvis, & Bobko, 2012). At the same time, stereotypical beliefs of
120 women's features seem to be well rooted (Biernat & Vescio, 2002).

121 have to learn to be happy about ourselves, respect our own achievements, and appreciate our own opportunities
122 and fulfill them.

123 When does the joy start?, asked a Finnish author Kari Hotakainen, and the same question was asked by Dr.
124 Taina Rantala (Rantala & Määttä, 2011) when she did research among bored and frustrated fourth-graders. She
125 created ten theses to strengthen joy of learning at school. Likewise, Eliisa Leskisenoja (2016) showed how joy at
126 school could be improved by applying principles of positive psychology. Uusiautti and Määttä (2015) have done
127 research on how positive emotions and successes at work can have a farreaching positive influence on people's
128 lives.

129 Basic positivity, positive thoughts about others and a positive self-image, can help surpassing feelings of failure
130 or mistakes that must be allowed to everyone, even oneself. On the other hand, it would be good to be strong
131 enough or one's own direction if new information or experiences prove it reasoned.

132 Perhaps, the ability to choose wisely is more important feature and strength than we often realize. People have
133 enormous potential! It is difficult to decide what one should become and what to accomplish in life. However,
134 time and resources are limited and women should not be bystanders or stay worrying their reasons for too long.

135 Previous experiences may hinder women if they gnaw their self-esteem or self-appreciation. Belief in one's
136 success may be weak in adulthood. Researchers call this phenomenon "impostor phenomenon" (Clance & Imes,
137 1978): when people suffering from this syndrome succeed, they think they are cheating the world and assume
138 their success to be just coincidence and not real.

139 5 d) Collaboration with and between Women

140 Women have to start collaborating and finding mutual connection with other women. Instead of isolating
141 themselves, the purpose should be to work for enhancing everyone's opportunities and providing support for
142 each other. When women's feelings and experiences become worded, they can turn into expertise, freedom, and
143 courage. Clearly, the acknowledgment of women's experiences and sensitivity will help us to build work life that
144 has space to intimacy, honesty, joy, and justice.

145 Solidarity is needed and it can be spread among women by supporting-not by leaning on harsh experiences
146 such as "I have made it here by myself, why couldn't she do the same?" (Van Den Brink, Holgersson, Linghad,
147 & Deé, 2016). Men's old-boy network has helped men, so why women find it difficult to collaborate? Research in
148 workplaces where women dominate have often problems that are also called "toxic workplaces" (Gilbert, Carr-
149 Ruffino, Ivancevich, & Konopaske, 2012). These situations can not only be detrimental to employee health and
150 emotional wellbeing (Gilbert et al., 2012) but also prevent talented employees advancing their careers (Buunk,
151 Goor, & Solano, 2010).

152 Competition among women is a complex phenomenon because women do not tend to openly compete for jobs
153 or positions, but they do it in a hidden and stealthy manner (see e.g., ??racy, 1991).

154 Therefore, it would incredibly important to learn to support each other and give space to the idea of helping
155 others does not take anything from you but, indeed, gives back in many ways-not to mention increased well-being
156 at work for starters (Uusiautti & Määttä, 2013)! We can set an example to men and women by being individuals
157 who dare to use their personalities free from possible gender-related chains: doors should be open to many kinds
158 of experts (Bleijenbergh & Van Engen, 2015). Women who are leaders can support other women by giving them
159 resources and opportunities to advance in their careers (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000).

160 Likewise, women as leaders are models to girls. They see how leader women have developed their strengths
161 and directed their resources wisely. These kinds of examples hopefully free girls from, for example, pressures of
162 thinking about their looks and teach them how to show their expertise in their talents and strengths (see e.g.,
163 Savukoski, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2016).

164 6 VI. Conclusion: Do Women have Enough

165 Courage?

166 As the 2020s is getting closer, numerous changes and crises, challenges take place. Globalization and related
167 hopes and threats, refugee floods, climate change, digitalization, and deeper gap between the poor and the
168 wealthy make facing these challenges true and frightening. Life in the middle of changes requires leadership that
169 provides new dimensions and requirements also for women as leaders. The changes may also show how very much
170 needed women are to become leaders (see Jyrkinen & McKie, 2011; Kalaitzi et al., 2017).

171 When looking at the world situation and change management one can conclude that for some changes form
172 a threat that has to be rejected no matter what. This will only lead to isolation and clustering. On the other
173 hand, some people tend to believe in a determined manner that there is no other option than passive adjustment.
174 Others control our lives and destinies.

175 Luckily, some people perceive the change and related crises as challenges (Uusiautti, 2015) that ignite the
176 wish to search for new solutions and change one's own conceptions and ways of action. The starting point is
177 to learn to live through changes and to tolerate or merely appreciate insecurity and difference. This shows Fear
178 makes us stick to old, while courage helps us build new. Various experiments can be easily judged as naïve or
179 weak but it also may be that these exact experiments show path forward. Everything that may lead us forward
180 and provides new expertise can be significant. Nothing happens without trying. And there is not just one right
181 solution but different kinds of adventures should be appreciated and acknowledged they give birth to new kind
182 of courage. These are difficult but important guidelines to women, female leaders, and mothers and their way of
life and make a difference. ^{1 2}

In sum:

? One needs courage to be open to changes and
face new situations and challenges. If one lacks this
kind of courage, one will not develop.

? One needs courage to realize one's personal
strengths and opportunities. Lack of self-esteem

Year keeps one insecure and passive. ? One needs courage to make decisions.
2017 Fearful insecurity does not lead to decisions. ? One needs courage to follow
one's own principles, beliefs, and conscience. Fear makes one act
inconsistently.

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Figure 1:

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6 VI. CONCLUSION: DO WOMEN HAVE ENOUGH

239 [References Références Referencias courage in many ways. And like the milestones and women related to these listed earlier in this paper, we want to state that taking challenges as chances can support women in their aspirations for changing the world to be a better place, 2014. Benschop & Van den Brink.

240 References Références Referencias courage in many ways. And like the milestones and women related to these listed earlier in this paper, we want to state that taking challenges as chances can support women in their aspirations for changing the world to be a better place, 2014. Benschop & Van den Brink.

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