

Initiative for Gender Equity in the Public Sector
Research Translation Brief

Gender Competency in Public Administration Education

Teaching Public Administration

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In a Nutshell

Gender competency is largely missing from Master of Public Administration (MPA) education, leaving future public administrators unprepared to address gender issues in policy and practice. Our research reveals that MPA students have limited exposure to gender competency in their coursework, despite its importance for effective public service. To address this gap, MPA programs should integrate gender competency throughout the curriculum and provide experiential learning opportunities to build students' skills in recognizing and addressing gender inequities in public administration.

The Problem

MPA programs are not adequately preparing students with gender competency skills needed for effective public service leadership.

This lack of preparation perpetuates gender inequities in public policy, administrative decision-making, and workplace culture.

New Insights for Addressing the Problem

- Over 60% of surveyed MPA students reported their education did not teach them about gender competency
- Most students gained gender competency knowledge outside the classroom, primarily through workplace experiences
- Students expressed strong interest in more gender competency education, with 59% interested in taking a dedicated course
- Students felt only somewhat prepared to apply gender competency in the workplace

Why Are These Insights Important?

- Reveals a critical gap between MPA education and the gender competency skills needed in public service careers
- Highlights student demand and readiness for more gender competency training
- Identifies opportunities to enhance MPA curricula to better prepare future public administrators

What Should Decision Makers Do?

MPA program directors and faculty should:

- Assess current curricula and integrate gender competency across all courses, especially required and foundational classes
- Develop standalone courses on gender competency in public administration
- Incorporate case studies, role-playing exercises, and policy simulations to build practical gender competency skills
- Partner with public sector organizations to provide experiential learning opportunities

NASPAA and accrediting bodies should:

- Strengthen standards and guidelines around gender competency in MPA curricula
- Provide resources and training to support faculty in teaching gender competency

Public sector employers should:

- Partner with MPA programs to offer internships and experiential learning focused on gender equity issues
- Provide ongoing gender competency training for employees at all levels

What Do We Still Need to Know?

- How does gender competency education in MPA programs vary across different institutions and geographic regions?
- What are the most effective pedagogical approaches for building gender competency skills?
- How does increased gender competency education impact workplace outcomes and policy implementation?

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