

Gender Policy in Higher Education in Sri Lanka

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Until recently University education in Sri Lanka continued to be a government monopoly. All Universities in Sri Lanka are government funded and except the Open University of Sri Lanka, depend on government grants for about 95 % of their expenditure. The Sri Lankan university system which operates under the University Act of 1978 consists of 15 national Universities, one School of Computing, the University Grants Commission and the National Education Commission.

The objectives of this paper are to examine the policy initiatives in Sri Lanka at the national level, examine national & organisational policy initiatives in respect of gender equity in higher education, identify drivers for national & organisational policy initiatives on gender equity and assess the correspondence (or lack of) between international, national & organisational policy initiatives especially in respect of gender equity in higher education.

Initially the analysis in the paper focuses on the international policy documents that impinge on national policy making in the identified areas of gender equity with special reference to education and higher education and then review the national and case study university policy documents in relation to the international policy documents.

The review and analysis indicate that ratification of the UN Convention has had an impact on the national level policies which has enacted necessary legislation, and instituted certain organisational mechanisms to put into implementation the policy decisions. But higher education appears to have in general swerved away from the concerns with equity matters (including higher education) towards aspects of relevance, quality and efficiency emerging as priority issues in the context of globalisation and privatisation. Gender is considered as a non-issue in higher educational policies at the national as well as organisational levels.

Key words: Gender; Higher Education; Sri Lanka; Policy; Organizations

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