

A Curriculum for Women by Women: Curriculum Transformation at the University of Colombo

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Feminist scholars have been the driving force of curriculum transformation initiatives at the University of Colombo. While there has been neither national policy nor formal discussions initiated at the overall institutional or faculty levels regarding incorporating gender into the curriculum, a few, yet, influential women have made significant contributions to transform the curriculum. With the exception of the Faculties of Science and Management, a gender dimension has been incorporated into curricula at both the undergraduate and post graduate levels. There are a significant number of courses whose main focus is gender, while other courses have included gender as part of the analytical framework. The Master of Arts in Women's Studies was one of the first two programmes offered by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The introduction of a Gender Studies Stream in 2004 was the first initiative to introduce gender at an institutional level. The stream has not designed new course material, but pulls together courses taught in the different departments to provide an inter-disciplinary understanding of gender issues and concepts.

Interviews and class observations conducted during the 'Gender Equity in Higher Education' project, revealed that these courses have had a significant impact on mainly women students whose personal and professional lives have been transformed after participating in feminist discourse. While on the one hand, the lack of policy level initiatives has been counteracted by the personal investment some women faculty members have made, on the other hand, the structural indifference of the university has meant that these efforts have continued to stagnate mostly at the personal level. One could even argue that the lack of opposition to individual efforts has resulted in the lack of advocacy for curriculum transformation at the institutional level.

This paper critically examines the sustainability of these changes and explores what changes need to take place to institutionalize curriculum transformation in order to ensure that both women and men are transformed.

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