

## Gender Equity in Higher Education in Sri Lanka: Beyond Access

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The objectives of this paper are to (1) examine the progress made in ensuring women's access to university education, and specifically, to different disciplines of study (2) analyse macro-level employment statistics as related to educational levels of males and females, and (3) career mobility of women academics.

The methodology used is the analysis of national level statistics in the University Grants Commission and other pertinent governmental institutions.

The study found that in Sri Lanka women's representation in higher education had visibly improved over the years, in all disciplines except Engineering due to the implementation of progressive social welfare policies in education. Stereotypical societal attitudes however, hinder their participation in non-traditional subject areas, and in utilizing available resources, such as the library, computer facilities and co- curricular activities in the university fully, and thereby obstruct the optimum realization of their potential to equip them for employment. Absence of women-focused strategies for professional development, continue to prevent women academics from achieving carrier mobility.

The study concludes that equity in outcomes rather than mere numerical access of women to higher education should be targeted to ensure achievement of gender equity in real terms.

Key Words: Gender; Equity; Higher Education; Women academics; Macro-level employment

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