Razia Asim*
Pervez A. Shami**
Ghulam Zainab***
Abida Khurrum****

Perceptions of Teachers and Students about Gender Friendly Institution of Higher Learning

Abstract

The study aimed at investigating the comparative perceptions of teachers and students about gender friendly institutions of higher learning. The major objectives of the study was to investigate and compare the perceptions of teaching- learning community about gender friendly institutions of higher learning regarding various aspects such as equality of opportunities, equality of treatment, equality of respect, equality of utilities, equality of workload, institutional policies and rules by major demographic features. The teachers and students of universities formulated the population of the study of which samples was drawn. Tool of research- questionnaire was adapted from the work of ILO sponsored Education Development Center (2007) and pilot tested for data collection and situation analysis. The tool had twelve factors comprising sixty two items associated with gender friendly institutions to be measured on three point scale denoting Yes, No and Don't know. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to analyze data. T-test was used to make comparison setting level of confidence as 0.05. The data reveals the perception of university teachers and students about the gender friendly institution of higher learning as sketchy and non-transparent as universities appear to follow weaker practices in the context of gender mainstreaming and practically there is need to promote gender equality and implementation of gender friendly institution policies and practices.

Keywords: Gender, institutions of higher learning,

Introduction

In every culture and society, opportunities, responsibilities and rights are the product of popular perceptions concerning the position of men and women and their roles in both public and private life (MFA, 2002). In learning institutions and at home, individuals predominantly identify their roles in their cultural contexts as male or female and hence develop gender identity. How men and women react with each other and the way they develop is affected by the gender roles and environmental opportunities. The power based inequalities prevail on gender roles in most of the cultures and intensify in learning institutions and at workplaces. (Education Development Centre, 2007)

Gender responsive friendly working environment of an institution requires equal participation of boys and girls in various programs of education and equal treatment and opportunities for studies to develop themselves to the best of their abilities. All over the world the economic and social situation of students varies; consequently differences are being observed in the enrolment rate. Female enrolment rate is increasing in most of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries especially in higher education, and in some European countries the number of girls has already been more than the

* *Department of Education, University of Sargodha, Sargodha.*
**Department of Education, Sarhad University, Peshawar.*
*** *Lincoln Corner, University of Sargodha, Sargodha*
****Department of Education, University of Lahore Campus, Sargodha.*

boys whereas the females are severely under-represented in developing countries (Lang, 2010).

Pakistan has 187 (2016-17) universities and degree awarding institution with more than 1.3 million students (2014-15). In The male and female ratio is estimated as 3:1. Pakistan the number of female participation in higher education is also on the increase but severe gender disparity exists. In all over South Asia, only Pakistan is the country with the widely gender gap and prejudice alongside women persist to continue in all spheres of life (UNICEF 2007). Mathabe (2009) asserts that there is a need to pay urgent attention on the women's participation at all levels of higher education.

Policies can be better defined with special reference to the actual needs of women and men by taking into account the gender equality dimensions. Gender mainstreaming in this sense, is an actual win to win policy because lives of all peoples, either women or men, will thus improve (Rubery, 2008). Gender mainstreaming directs to formulation of better informed policy decision-making and consequently better governance.

It is a recognized fact that world over the women folk is one of the most ignored segment of the society and most underutilized human resource. The roles, relationships, attitudes, values, behavior and power refer to gender as assigned by the social setup whereas biological characteristics that differentiate between males and females refer to the sex. Since gender is constructed by the society and identity that is learned can be different within and across cultures. The factors like ethnic background, race, age, education, social classes, religion, and economic, geographic and political environment affect gender roles that may change over time and according to the circumstances (Education Development Centre, 2007). Question arises do the institutions of higher learning playing their role in Pakistan? Wajcman (2007) highlights that top management in the university is responsible for gender action. However it is usually distributed in the whole organization through number of layers and frameworks.

Due to different visualized roles, responsibilities and experiences men and women though important have different reflection in the society. Even physical space for males and females in the institution is not only designed differently but also utilized differently. Consequently now-a-days many organizational plans and policies tend to focus and meet the gender-based needs. As we know in shaping a person gender identities and environment play very significant role. The elements of the learning environment such as the behavior of learners with one another, opportunities given to learners and inter and intra treatment of educators with learners and colleagues all are influenced by the established gender roles in the society. Lang (2010) asserts that "social relations are influenced by the physical environment". Literature is evident that on academic and physical facilities related to gender issues a few studies have been conducted (UNICEF, 2009). Moreover the demographic treatment reveals to statisticians insufficiency of data that are not sex-disaggregated and act in response to serious information linked to gender equality (U.N., 2002). Hence the state of the art review and analysis has developed concern to investigate the perception of students and teachers about gender friendly institutions of higher learning.

1.   Research Methodology
The study seeks to explore the perception of teachers and students about gender friendly institutions of higher learning with respect to selected variables by conspicuous demographic

features. This is epistemologically constructive, inductive as fragmentary details has been collected to a connected view of the situation (Grey, 2004)and descriptive study designed to compare perception of teachers and students about gender friendly environment of higher learning. Study was non-contrived as no manipulation has been done and hence data is collected in natural settings (Shami & Khawaja (2008). Survey and quantitative method has been applied for data collection. According to Fraenkel & Wallen (2009), "Cross sectional method is way in which data is collected once from the sample and this method usually utilize questionnaire to collect data". Present study was cross sectional and data were collected at one point in time. Study focuses universities as gender friendly institution and hence it has been necessary for the researcher to select the population on which the results could easily and logically be generalized. For this reason teachers and students of all the departments of the University of Sargodha were selected as the population. Teachers and students are the important part of the institutions of higher learning. Choices of the subjects were made on the basis of convenient sampling from the departments. Sample of the study was comprised 34 teachers and 99 students including both males and females. A questionnaire was adapted from the toolkit of ILO sponsored Education Development Center (2007). The draft questionnaire was comprised sixty two items covering twelve aspects namely females & higher education, policies, access, facilities, culture, curriculum, teaching methods, assessment, extracurricular activities, counseling and support services, recruitment of staff, evaluation practices . After deliberations with focus group eleven new items were added and some were changed according to the situation, some items excluded. Researcher personally visits the departments of universities for the purpose of data collection. This data has been analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive and inferential statistics has been applied and t-test is used to determine the difference among groups.

2.   Data Analysis

Table 1.1: *Distribution of responses of Teachers and Students about dimensions of gender friendly institution of higher learning*

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Group	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't know
1	Female & education	Teachers	96	01	3%
		Students	85	12	3%
		Total	90	7	3%
2	Policies	Teachers	53	37	10%
		Students	51	38	11%
		Total	52	38	10%
3	Access	Teachers	82	10	8%
		Students	77	15	8%
		Total	79	13	8%
4	Facilities	Teachers	69	21	10%
		Students	68	25	7%
		Total	68	23	9%
5	Culture	Teachers	77	19	4%
		Students	71	22	7%
		Total	74	21	5%
6	Curriculum	Teachers	65	24	11%
		Students	66	26	8%
		Total	65	25	10%

7	Teaching Methods	Teachers	75	20	5%
		Students	72	22	6%
		Total	73	21	6%
8	Assessment	Teachers	79	15	6%
		Students	75	21	4%
		Total	77	18	5%
9	Co-curricular Activities	Teachers	85	10	5%
		Students	73	18	9%
		Total	79	14	7%
10	Counseling and support services	Teachers	71	15	14%
		Students	60	29	11%
		Total	65	23	12%
11	Recruitment of staff	Teachers	73	22	5%
		Students	66	27	7%
		Total	69	25	6%
12	Monitoring Practices	Teachers	74	19	7%
		Students	55	29	16%
		Total	64	24	12 %

Table 1.1 reflects the perceptions of teachers and students about various aspects of gender friendly institutions of higher learning.

3.   Results and Discussion
3.1 Females, Higher Education and Development

Perception of a large majority of teachers (96%) and students (85%) of institutions of higher learning reflect positive vision that country cannot progresses without female participation in education; both female and male have equal rights to higher education and universities play major role in promotion of higher education. Further analysis of data reveals no significant difference between male and female groups among students and teachers. The perceptions of university teachers and students set the thesis of the paper that females, institutions and higher education are essential components for development of the country.

3.2 Policies

The views of 47% university teachers and 49% students appear to dissatisfy about university policies regarding support to gender mainstreaming and making universities as gender friendly institutions. They observe some weaker elements that to them could be hindrance in the way of gender friendly institutions.

Analysis of data reveals that almost equal percentage of teachers and students visualize that universities have their mission and vision statements about gender-friendly education, universities' policies spell out promotion of female participation in higher education (73%, 75%), mainstreaming of female students (62%, 68%), discipline rules are equally admissible (59%, 69%) and universities have due rules and regulation as well as Committees to eliminate gender discrimination and sexual harassment on campuses (88%58%). While teachers and students denounce the universities that institutions of higher learning have not translated the national and international policies about gender equality and sensitization into university based plans and policies (59%,64% & 65%, 64%) and the universities do not allocate desired funds for gender sensitization activities(67%,62%) on campuses. The inclination of respondents appears towards disagreement with the statement- university has policies about gender mainstreaming.

If this situation persist in the universities then it is not possible to have true gender friendly institution. Further analysis of data revealed that there was no significant difference between the views of male and female as well as arts and science teachers and students about university policies.

Inadequate practices in the context of gender mainstreaming in the university require, institutional policies addressing discrimination, sexual harassment and professional treatment. The situation demands from the institutions of higher learning to formulate policies to eliminate gender disparity and for the encouragement of equal empowerment.

3.3 Access

A conspicuous majority of the university students (77%) and teachers (82%) expressed that the females have equal access to higher education for their professional development without any gender discrimination. Universities seem to follow open admission policy, offer programs of female interest also and do facilitate free education to the needy and orphans. So the analysis shows that the practices related to access of most universities to higher education are in line with gender mainstreaming and gender friendly institutions.

The weaker components of institutional practices regarding female access to higher education demand that females should be given financial incentives where necessary to accomplish gender parity. Universities should have linkage with other sister universities and exchange visits and programs to encourage mutual learning with particular reference to gender mainstreaming and to establish gender friendly institutions.

3.4 Facilities

A substantial number of university teachers (31%) and students (32%) do not seem to agree that universities offer appropriate facilities in relation to gender friendly institution. Findings of the study reveal that a quartile of the both groups- teachers and students view that female students have no facility to say their prayers(23%,26%), lack common room for female students (26%,31%), gender bias visual displays throughout the university (21%,31%), absence of day care centers (26%,23%),availability of separate toilets and washrooms(9%,15%). From the situation analysis it seems that the universities are unable to facilitate all female students and teachers. Further analysis reflects that there is significant difference between the views of male and female university teachers about the facilities being provided to female students. However there appears no significant difference between the views of male and female university students about the gender biased facilities in the universities.

The access of the male and female teachers and students to all types of up to date research journals and databases should be ensured to the university libraries. The visual displays throughout the university should be free of gender bias. There should be separate toilets for both female teachers and students. There should be day care centers for the children of female students and teachers as per instruction of provincial governments to make institution gender friendly.

3.5 University Culture

The university teachers and students have expressed their opinion that the universities tend to prepare both female and male students for careers (87%,85%), offer knowledge and skills to

both to be enlightened citizens(82%,72%), hold formal and informal discussion among staff and students about gender equality(79%,67%),train teachers and staff with respect to gender related aspects(62%,58%) and offer awards and scholarships to encourage gender studies (76%,69%). However about 25% students do hold that universities do not organize formal discussions for students and teachers awareness and neither train teachers in gender related issues.

The universities have weak mechanism of obtaining feedback, lack procedure of reflecting on practices and poor implementation record of strategies and policies regarding gender mainstreaming. Formal and informal discussion and debates about gender mainstreaming and gender equality need to be regular features in university life. For developing gender friendly culture universities should focus on proper training programs of teachers and staff with respect to gender related issues.

3.6 Curriculum
It is interesting to note that 35% university teachers and 34% university students visualize that curriculum of the university disciplines is nor gender friendly. The teachers and students of institutions of higher learning has expressed that teaching materials in use promote gender equality and cooperation (82%,70%),both female and male learners have equal access to all subjects(85%,70%), female students are encouraged to opt courses which have been considered for males only(44%, 61%), university teachers and staff well informed to play appropriate role in gender friendly institutions (68%,62%), university has developed guidelines for gender equality in formulation of courses (62%,62%) and board of studies pay due emphasis on gender mainstreaming (53%, 65%). It is to be noted that teachers are equally divided as 44% also negated that female students are being encouraged to follow male biased subjects. A substantial group of students (30%) do point out that university has not developed any guide lines for teachers on gender equality. Regarding boards of studies 32% teachers have negative opinion that boards do not focus gender mainstreaming while formulating curricula of various subjects. Further analysis show no significant differences between the views of male and female as well as arts and science teachers and students.

The boards of studies appear to undermine the importance of gender issues while decision-making about the curriculum of disciplines. Curriculum should facilitate female students to pursue their careers and choose the subjects of their choice.

3.7 Teaching Methods
The views of 75% university teachers and 72% university students about the teaching methods has depicted that in general teaching methods support gender friendly approach that universities are following. Findings of the study reveal the opinion of faculty members and students that there exists equal opportunities of classroom participation for both female and male students (91%,74%) , students grouping in classes by non-gender criteria (71%,68%), classroom seats are not fixed for females only(82%,66%), expectations of teachers are equal from both male and female students (91%,74%), teachers pay equal attention to both male and female students(85%,75%),positive feedback is given to all students (91%,80%), extra help is given to female students if required (68%,54%), teachers have high expectations from all students, regardless of their gender (59%, 64%), teachers encourage female students to complete their higher education(85%,66%), teaching methods are free from gender stereotypes (68%,69%), teacher maintains gender equality in the class room (79%,75%), both male and female students

perform activities together to solve problems(79%,80%), teacher guides are available (15%, 73%) and existence of equal opportunities for female students to participate in different seminars(94%,77%) . It is interesting to note that substantial groups of teachers and students do negate that female students are given extra help and teachers have high expectations from all students. A large majority of teacher also appear to negate the availability of teachers guide to handle mixed classes.

Proactive teaching methods should be encouraged so that female students can complete their higher education. Teaching methods need to be free from gender stereotypes. Students grouping in the classrooms should be made by using criteria other than gender for different academic activities.

3.8 Assessment
The 79% university teachers and 75% university students view that students are fairly graded on the basis of their performance.
Findings reveal the opinion of the faculty members and students that students are fairly graded on the basis of their performance (79%, 81%) and question papers are not gender biased (79%, 67%).

Universities are usually blamed for lenient marking systems. Students either males or females need to be fairly graded on the basis of their performance. Question papers should not be gender biased as well. Interesting as well as challenging with specified objectives makes the institution gender friendly.

3.9 Co-curricular activities
The views of subjects about co-curricular activities reflect that 85% university teachers and 73% students opined that there are equal opportunities for females and males to participate in extracurricular activities. Analysis of data show the views of faculty members and university students that most subjects analyze equal opportunities of participate in games and sports for both genders (88%, 70%), encouragement of females to join sports (77%,72%) and equal opportunities of participation in all co-curricular activities (91%, 74%) in the universities. It means that the aspects related to gender mainstreaming and gender friendly institutions are being focused regarding extracurricular activities in the universities.

3.10 Counseling and support services
Among university teachers and students 71% teachers and 60% students respectively expressed that counseling and support services on gender matters are provided to all students of the university. Data analysis of this aspect show that counseling support services on gender matters are being provided to all students of university (77%, 61%), psychological and legal aid services are are available to students (65%, 55%), students help university to develop guidelines and rules regarding gender discrimination(65%,55%), university uses its radio for gender issues awareness in the society in general and on campus in particular(74%,66%) and university organizes debates and talk shows regularly on gender mainstreaming (74%,60%). The responses of respondents in case of provision of legal services and students' involvement in formulating guidelines appear to be negated by a substantial number of teachers and students. Similarly a significant number of students (60%) disagree regarding the organization of debates on gender issues regularly.

From this situation it can be infer that the universities are not properly providing guidance and counseling services as well as psychological and legal aids to victims of sexual harassment which is against the norms of gender mainstreaming and gender friendly institution.

3.11 Recruitment of staff

The data reflect that 73% university teachers and 66% university students seem to agree with the process of recruitment of staff for university positions to be in line with gender friendly. Findings of the study show the opinion of faculty members and students that job description of all staff members of university have clear reference to gender equality (73%,64%), to address gender equality and mainstreaming issues qualified staff is appointed in the university (77%,59%), for appointment of new staff members tests and interviews includes questions to assess their awareness of gender issues(62%,65%) and teachers and staff are given proper training in gender related aspects in the university(82%,65%). A substantial number of university teachers and even larger group of students negate the above mentioned views of their counterparts which makes the situation questionable regarding the status of gender friendly institutions. Universities should focus on gender mainstreaming while recruiting staff. For appointment of new staff members tests and interviews need to include questions to assess their awareness of gender issues.

3.12 Monitoring practices

The data reflect that 74% university teachers and 55% students viewed that university monitor plans and actions through different means where as 26% teachers and 4% students disagree with their respective counter parts. The faculty members and students have opined that university present annual report about the progress of gender friendly aspects and mainstreaming (73%, 59%), university uses services of experts to analyze the gender issues (65%, 51%), expenditure report on gender related activities is publicized every year (76%, 48%) and university conducts fair appraisal of the gender friendly programs (79%, 61%).Hence it seems divided opinion of the faculty members and students in some aspects of gender friendly institutional practices.

Universities should have inter and intra university forum on which male and female faculty interact with each other and share their experience and knowledge. The appointments of the heads of the department should not only be on seniority basis but there should be prior proper training to perform management functions of gender friendly institution. University should use services of experts to analyze gender issues in order to improve upon gender friendly practices.

Conclusions

The promotion of the gender mainstreaming is one of the major functions of the universities all over the world. After the detailed analysis of the teachers and students responses, vivid picture of the universities as gender friendly institution has been emerged. It means that according to views of teachers most of the dimensions of gender friendly institution are being addressed by the universities whereas a substantial number of students disagree that university has not addressed all the dimensions to become gender friendly institutions of higher learning. When perceptions of various groups are compared the analysis in most cases show no significant differences between the opinions of male and female and arts and science teachers and students.

The universities need to improve weak aspects of access, culture, teaching methods, assessment procedures, where as thoroughly revamp policies, physical facilities, curriculum, guidance and counseling services, recruitment of staff, monitoring & evaluation practices to make institution of higher learning gender friendly.

References

1. Asim, Razia (2009), Study of teachers and students perceptions about gender friendly institutions of higher learning; an unpublished thesis submitted to the University of Sargodha as partial fulfillment for the award of M.Phil. Degree.

2. Education Development Center (2007). Buliding a gender friendly school Environment: a toolkit for educators and their unions, Brussels: Education Internationa, 45p.
3. Fraenkek,J.R.& Wallen, N.E.(2009). How to design and evaluate research in education, New York: McGraw-hill.
4. Grey, D.E.(2004).Doing research in the real world, SAGE Publications Inc.
5. Lang, S. (2010). A gender perspective on educational facilities. *OECD* .
6. Mathabe, N.(2009) "Mainstreaming Gender into Universities". Journal of Educational Research in Africa.

7. MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), (2002). Institutional and Organizational change:Gender
8. Mainstreaming. Netherlands: Foreign Information and Communication.
9. Rubery, J. (2008). A review of engendering policy in the EU. Social Policy Review 20,241-261.
10. Shami,P.A. & Khawaja.S.H (2008). Research Methods in education. Academy of
11. Educational Planning and Management, Ministry of Education.p.4

12. United Nations, (2002). Gender Mainstreaming: An overview. p,10: NY
13. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2007). Annual report 2006, UNICEF
14. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2009), Child Friendly Schools Manual,
15. UNICEF, New York.
16. Wajcman, Judy. (2007). from women and technology to gendered techno-science.
17. Information, Communication & Society 10, 287-298.