

**ASHANK DESAI CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES, IIT BOMBAY**

**MPP Entrance Test**

**Part – 2: Essay Test [1 hour]**

**Venue: LC 201/202 Time: 9:30 - 11:30 Date: 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2024 Total Duration: 2.0 hours**

**ADCPS Serial No.: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Only For The Examiner:**

<b>Q. No.</b>	<b>Part 1 (45)</b>	<b>Part 2: Essay (55)</b>	<b>Total: (100)</b>
<b>Marks</b>			

**Two Signatories: Checked A) \_\_\_\_\_ B) \_\_\_\_\_**

**Q1. Read the policy brief titled “*The state of women’s leadership in higher education*”.**

**In 800-1000 words only please address the following questions (please take out time to organize your written response):**

- 1. Summarize the key argument in the policy brief.**
  - 2. Why do you think women are less represented in leadership positions in *Indian* higher education institutions?**
  - 3. What policy interventions do you suggest to correct for any imbalances in India?**
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# International Briefs for Higher Education Leaders

**I**nternational Briefs for Higher Education Leaders reflects a strategic collaboration between the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) at Boston College.

Recognizing that higher education is an increasingly complex global enterprise, the Briefs series is designed to bring a comparative perspective to critical topics and emerging issues. Installments highlight experiences from a variety of national contexts, provide cross country analysis, and explore opportunities for international collaboration.

Articles and contributions are written by leading international scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners, with the ultimate goal of helping institutional and government leaders around the world develop cumulative knowledge to inform policies, establish impactful partnerships, and tackle key challenges affecting higher education today.



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## WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AROUND THE WORLD

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## The “State” of Women’s Leadership in Higher Education

Fanny M. Cheung

The increasing enrollment of female undergraduate students across most of the world has given the false impression that gender equality has been achieved in higher education. We often hear people say that women are doing well and gender equality is not an issue. Some even say that with the five to 10 percent increase in enrollment rate, women are surpassing men, and consider that a “problem.” However, increased female enrollment in higher education is only one dimension of gender equality, and the unfortunate reality is that equality remains elusive nearly everywhere in the world, particularly when it comes to questions of leadership. A rise in the undergraduate enrollment of female students has not been translated into a similar increase in women’s representation at other levels of the academy. This is a crucial problem for global higher education.

Gender parity in leadership is not only a matter of fairness, but also a crucial requirement in the context of the changing higher education landscape. The social justice dimensions of this issue are self-evident, but there are also clear educational and financial benefits to increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions. Despite rising percentages of women students and junior faculty members, there are still too few role models of female leadership for these changing constituents. Technological changes and internationalization in higher education, epitomized by the COVID-19 pandemic challenge, require diverse perspectives and innovative solutions that transform the traditional male-normed leadership culture.

Studies on women’s leadership show that women are more likely than men to present transformational leadership characteristics which motivate innovation and growth through team work. The business case of women’s leadership in the corporate world demonstrates that companies with more women board members are more profitable. Over the past three years, the Global Citizen Award for World Leaders has been awarded to women leaders who, despite being few in number, have used their political influence to improve the lives of people in poverty.

It is therefore crucial that we take stock of the current “state” of women’s leadership in global higher education, in order to identify key challenges which are preventing women from contributing their substantial talents to the benefit of higher education around the globe.

## The Current “State of Play”

The representation of women within senior leadership of higher education is seriously lagging everywhere in the world, with far fewer women than men holding any positions of leadership in every region of the world (see Table 1). There are, of course, signs of progress. For example, it is encouraging to note that 39 out of the top 200 institutions in the world (19.5 percent) are currently led by women, a slight increase from the 34 universities (17 percent) led by women in 2019 (Bothwell, 2020). The statistics for institutions in the top 200 in some individual countries are much more promising (e.g., the US, Sweden, the Netherlands and the UK) (Bothwell, 2020).

However, when the data are further disaggregated, the story becomes more complex. Women leaders in higher education are disproportionately more likely to lead smaller colleges or women’s universities, particularly in South Asian countries, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). In Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong, the top national or public universities that have entered the highest ranks of the international league tables are not led by woman presidents.

There is also a fundamental lack of data on gender in many parts of the world, which prevents our ability to truly understand the various dimensions of the issue. In the “gender-blind” contexts of academia, there are few institutional repositories of gender statistics that are collected and reviewed regularly within universities, or held at country or regional levels. As a result, disparities are often not identified.

Gender distribution in different ranks often has to be extracted by researchers from original sources. Where statistics are available, a leaking pipeline of women in senior administration positions in academia is evident (with the possible exception of Scandinavian countries where specific targets have been set and met). Gender analyses help to reveal patterns of bias which are otherwise hidden under the guise of academic meritocracy claiming non-discriminatory equal opportunity policies. As such, a crucial first step for many contexts in the fight against inequality is the development of more robust and disaggregated institutional data.

## Systemic Barriers

In addition, much more needs to be done to address the systematic barriers preventing women from achieving leadership positions in higher education. Despite decades of effort through research, training and networking, numerous systematic barriers to women’s leadership in higher education remain at individual, institutional and societal levels.



**Table 1. Women in Higher Education Leadership**

REGION/COUNTRY	YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE LEADERS		
		Institutional Leaders (%)	Executive Leaders (%)	Academic Leaders (%)
Arab League <sup>i</sup>	2018	6.8		
Australia	2016	25	34	34
China: "First-class universities"	2019	4.8		
Latin America <sup>ii</sup>	2020	18		
Pacific Rim <sup>iii</sup>	2018		21	25
United Kingdom	2018	29	37	31
United States <sup>iv</sup>	2016	30.1		

Sources: Assembled by the author based on American Council on Education (2017) [United States], APRU (2019) [Pacific Rim], Eleragi & Salahuddin (2018) [Arab League], UNESCO-IESALC (2020) [Latin America], WomenCount (2017) [Australia], WomenCount (2018) [United Kingdom], and Zhang (2019) [China].

Female academics across the world share similar constraints, including the work-family interface, synchronization of their life cycle (marriage and childbirth) with the tenure clock, and socialization of femininity that deviates from the patriarchal perception of leadership competence. Cultural barriers grounded in the local contexts of different countries also complicate the picture for many aspiring female leaders.

At the institutional level, most academic institutions remain "gender-blind" in their policies, which – given the constraints listed above – actually results in a bias toward males. The social norms of gender roles, patriarchy, caste, and leadership perception in the wider society permeate through the education system.

With increased competition among universities, greedy institutions are demanding more time and commitment from their faculty members. Geographical mobility and lack of time boundaries pose special challenges for women who have family responsibilities. As evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, the productivity of women academics working from home is much more affected than their male counterparts. Gender equity also remains a peripheral issue, in the context of global competition for academic excellence, student recruitment, and funding.

### Support for Women in Higher Education Management

In an attempt to address these inequalities, women's leadership programs have been established in many higher

education institutions around the world – including global initiatives, such as Athena SWAN, and national initiatives, such as Advance UK's Aurora program. Many extra-institutional programs, such as HERS (Higher Education Resource Services) and its international chapters, and the ACE Women's Network, also provide training for women in higher education on professional development and leadership skills to guide them in their advancement.

Several international groups have also added a specific focus on gender equity within and across universities through more general programming. For example, the Association of Commonwealth Universities gender program shares gender-related practices and policies with over 500 member universities and offers gender grants to advance gender equity initiatives on campus. The Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) Asia Pacific Women in Leadership (APWiL) initiative has compiled a Directory of Programs & Initiatives to share case studies among its 65 member universities on challenges in promoting gender equity. Through their gender gap reports in 2013 and 2019, APWiL has also successfully lobbied for an APRU Presidents' Statement on Gender Equity and Diversity and piloted an international mentoring program in 2020 to introduce global and intercultural dimensions of women's leadership.

Individual women have also taken on the challenge, by forming mentoring relationships with younger female academics and establishing networks for mutual support and experience sharing. Many current female leaders in higher education

– particularly those who have made it to the top at globally prestigious universities – are the first women to occupy top positions in their institutions. As pioneers, they have made their way to the top in their own right in mostly gender-blind contexts.

In addition to acting as role models and champions for the next generation of female leaders, some of these pioneer women presidents have established networks. One example is the British Council's "Action for Women in Higher Education Leadership" group, which organizes a series of dialogues and workshops at the annual Going Global Conference, involving women vice-chancellors and pro-vice-chancellors, that focuses on strategies to promote women's leadership.

The World Women University Presidents Forum, launched in 2001, invites senior women university leaders from different regions of the world to attend biennial international forums held at different Chinese universities. The European Women Rectors Association, which began as a series of conferences for European women rectors and vice-rectors to share their experiences as academic leaders, was formally established in 2015 to promote the role of women in academic leadership and to advocate for gender equality in higher education in Europe and beyond.

Most of these support efforts target individual women's capacity building. Although they have helped to build up the pipeline of potential women leaders in some (mainly "Western") countries, such programs may be primarily reaching the "converted," with mainstream academic culture remaining largely oblivious. Furthermore, the notion that women are not proportionally represented in leadership positions because of individual agency and skills has been critiqued by some researchers (e.g., Shepherd, 2017), who point to structural and cultural impediments that cannot be addressed by training women themselves. Systemic barriers remain and stall the advancement of gender equity. Furthermore, the situation is not consistent across the world, with many "non-Western" countries lagging behind.

Gender equity measures remain on the fringe even though diversity and inclusion policies have been adopted in some universities. There is a gulf between institutional policies endorsing gender equity and actual practice (Aiston et al., 2020). Without mainstreaming gender equity in academic policies and practices, and without gender equity permeating throughout academic culture across all levels, these policies remain lip service. At the rate it is going, it may take another half-century before parity in higher education is achieved across the world.

Women have been building up their agency and readiness for leadership in higher education. It is clear that in spite of the systemic and cultural barriers in higher education and society, women continue to seek opportunities for leadership, with successful women leaders finding ways to support other women individually through mentorship and leadership development. The onus is then on innovative universities to mainstream gender in all policies and practices across the board to achieve substantive outcomes in gender equity.

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<sup>1</sup> Out of 746 universities, only the identities of 702 leaders could be verified.

<sup>2</sup> The survey sample included 475 public universities in nine countries.