



Gender on the higher education
learning agenda internationally:
Co-constructing foundations
for equitable futures

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT REPORT

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Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Contents	2
List of Tables	4
Abbreviations	5
Executive summary	6
Project Introduction	14
Background to gender and higher education in international contexts.....	16
Gender equality in international contexts	16
National higher education contexts	20
Institutional case studies	24
Research design.....	28
Findings	31
Introduction.....	31
1. Where is gender present and absent in the curriculum focus and approach of the five institutions?	34
2. How is gender presented as an issue and awareness in curriculum focus and approach across the five institutions?.....	39
3. Which individuals, values and agendas are driving the inclusion, rejection and co-opting of gender as a curriculum focus and approach across the five institutions?	47

4. What are the challenges and opportunities in developing more gender equitable approaches in curriculum?	52
Summary.....	58
Challenges and limitations	59
Recommendations	65
References.....	73

List of Tables

Page 32 Figure 1: Response to question How important do you think gender is to achieving wider social development goals?

Page 35 Figure 2. Response to question: To what extent do you see gender as relevant to teaching and learning in HE in the following academic disciplines?

Page 35 Figure 3. Response to question: Would you like Gender to be more fully represented and explored within your discipline?

Page 40 Figure 4. Response to question: Do you think representations of gender in your discipline promote gender equality?

Page 41 Figure 5. Response to question: In what ways, if any, do you see gender as relevant to teaching and learning in your discipline?

Page 48 Figure 6. Response to question: Who do you think should take responsibility for including gender in HE teaching and learning?

Page 53 Figure 7. Response to question: What are the challenges, if any, of incorporating and representing gender in more equitable ways in HE teaching and learning?

Page 66 Figure 8. Response to question: How should gender should be approached in teaching and learning?

Page 67 Figure 9. Response to question: Should gender be taught as a separate issue or in relation to other identity issues?

Abbreviations

AAU – The Association of African Universities

AISHE – All India Survey on Higher Education

DSSI - Direction des Stratégies et des Systèmes d'Information

GOTHELAI - Gender on the Higher Education Learning Agenda Internationally

GCRF - Global Challenges Research Fund

HCP – High Commission of Planning for Morocco

HE – Higher Education

HEI – Higher Education Institution

MDG – Millenium Development Goals

PSED - Public Sector Equality Duty

QAA – Quality Assurance Agency

UCAS Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

UK – United Kingdom

UNESCO – United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WEF – World Economic Forum

Executive summary

Funded by the British Academy under the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), Gender on the Higher Education Learning Agenda Internationally (GOTHELAI) includes research teams at universities in five partner countries: India, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Nigeria and the UK. The research addresses central questions around inclusion of gender in curriculum and pedagogy across disciplines, considering relevant motivations, challenges and opportunities. This report synthesises key findings from across our different country contexts.

Gender equality in international contexts

- In the last year **India's** gender gap has increased from 62% to 68% overall (WEF 2021). According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2021), India stands at 140th for gender equality among 156 countries, slipping 28 positions from 2020. A third of women are illiterate in India, which ranks 114 out of 156 countries for educational attainment inequalities.
- **Kazakhstan** ranks number 80 in the world for overall gender equality. There is gender parity in access to schooling and women are the predominant teaching staff in higher education. Overall Kazakhstan sits at number 116 globally on gender equality in educational attainment (WEF 2021).
- **Morocco** ranks 144th out of 156 countries total in the WEF 2021 Global Gender Gap Report. Morocco is 116 for educational attainment gender equality (WEF 2021). The literacy rate of the population aged 10 years and over increased from 38.1% in 2000 to 58.5% in 2019 for women, against 62.4% in 2000 to 77.1% in 2019 for men (HCP, 2014; HCP, 2020).
- **Nigeria** is number 139 overall in the Global Gender Equality Index. Nigeria's overall gender gap has widened since last year, driven by economic participation and financial resource inequalities, with women earning 58% of men's incomes. Nigeria is 146 of 156 countries for educational attainment (WEF 2021). Gender inequality

persists in higher education including in student enrolment alongside wider gender discriminatory practices (MDG Monitor, 2015; Aina et al., 2015; Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020).

- The **UK** ranks number 23 in the Global Gender Equality Index. However gender equality remains a challenge and women remain less likely to hold senior and managerial positions compared to men (WEF 2021). The UK is number 23 for women's Political Empowerment and 40 for Educational Attainment, but only 110 for Health and Survival (WEF 2021). The UK is number 55 of 156 countries for women's economic participation. 2020 employment rates were 71.8% for women and 78.2% for men; the lowest gap since recording in 1971.

Research design

We identified three academic disciplines (one Science, one Social Science, one Humanities) that were represented within our national case study university alongside all of our partner universities. Within each discipline we invited teaching staff ($n=7$) and final year undergraduate students (those anticipated to have the most extensive experience of being taught within their university) ($n=7$) to complete an anonymous online survey that included quantitative and qualitative responses, yielding a total of 42 institutional survey responses. Initial analysis of survey responses informed the design of interview questions subsequently targeted to a sample of four teaching staff (three department Heads and one institutional teaching lead) and three student representatives within the university. Interviews were carried out online via zoom, generating audio recording and written transcripts which was cleaned up and anonymised for analysis. Analysis themes were agreed between country teams via an iterative process. Data analysis was carried out using Excel for widest international team access. The research received institutional ethical approval.

Findings

1. Where is gender present and absent in the curriculum focus and approach of the five institutions?

More than 50% of participants across the five institutions, including students and faculty, agreed that gender should be integral to content and approach, in other words, a part of the overall Higher Education (HE) experiences. Kazakhstan, India and Nigeria identified that while gender was present, it was not adequately represented or addressed in their respective curriculum. UK participants did not share this view although participants indicated that experts with different gender identities were not well represented. The majority of participants from Morocco indicated that gender was important, especially when it came to achieving wider social development goals such as economic development and democracy. Participants from India and Nigeria also shared that some disciplines were associated with one gender. Participants across countries and disciplines agreed that gender is closely and directly linked with inclusion and needs to become more relevant across disciplines and pedagogic practice.

2. How is gender presented as an issue and awareness in curriculum focus and approach across the five institutions?

Participants from all genders and all disciplines in the five studied institutions, agreed that representations of gender in their discipline promote gender equality and awareness, even though it is expressed in various ways. All survey and interview participants from all the studied contexts and disciplines, both male and female, find gender as relevant to teaching and learning in their particular discipline, specifically in the topics that are taught, in the way teachers teach, such as using gender-inclusive examples and materials, in inviting contributions from students of different genders, or in the experts whose ideas are taught and valued.

The way that gender issues are presented in curriculum are differently perceived by participants. These different perceptions of gender issues and awareness denote that

despite achievements, there remains progress to be made in order to achieve greater inclusivity in higher education.

3. Which individuals, values and agendas are driving the inclusion, rejection and co-opting of gender as a curriculum focus and approach across the five institutions?

Participants across case studies frequently identified a 'quiet rejection' of the gender agenda in higher education teaching; and that where gender is included, this is largely driven by women. There was however also optimism across case study countries as to the potential for greater integration of gender with the effort of wider university communities. Participants saw gender inclusion as being the responsibility of university teachers (India, Kazakhstan, United Kingdom), management (Kazakhstan and Nigeria) and the whole university community (Morocco). Gender was frequently identified as being perceived as the responsibility of women staff and students rather than of all.

4. What are the challenges and opportunities in developing more gender equitable approaches in curriculum?

The study shows that across the universities participants perceive there to be gender inequality in both formal and informal curricula. The challenges in developing more gender equitable approaches in curriculum as indicated by participants are shared across cases relating to:

- existing systems of values and beliefs within societies stemming from deeply rooted gender bias;
- lack of theoretical understanding around the role of gender in curriculum and its value which results in lack of teacher expertise, and lack of teacher and student interest;
- lack of policies both at the national and institutional levels that would guide and drive gender inclusion efforts.

Challenges and limitations

- This research has focused on **the university classroom as one particular dimension** of the way in which gender inequality can play out in higher education contexts internationally. Wider gender inequalities in HR, while related, have been beyond our remit here. This includes selection and progression of students and staff; gender inequality in research processes; the university gender pay gap; and higher education policies.
- **Our case study approach** can only tell us about a small number of international and institutional contexts. Within this we were also limited to those academic departments that saw gender as sufficiently relevant for them to be willing to participate. We do not claim to be able to make definitive claims about higher education internationally from these five case studies.
- **Working together remotely** as an interdisciplinary, international research team has required clear, close communication, and clarification of research processes. Technological access has posed a challenge in some international contexts, as has working within the confines and difficulties presented by the COVID-19 global pandemic.
- While we have worked hard to embody **principles of equity and collaboration** as a team, we maintain critical awareness of the ways in which funding and institutional processes through Global North Higher Education Institutions lay challenge to these principles in practice.

Recommendations

1. **The need to raise awareness of gender equity and inclusion at an institutional level:** Across country contexts, the need for university-wide policies and training on gender inclusion was identified.

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2. **Gender as integral** to the approach to teaching and curriculum design rather than an add-on – this will ensure that gender does not remain an area only taken up by interested individuals.
 3. **Greater use of social media and communication** - to share good practices, foster networks, and to foster communities of inclusivity welcoming diverse students and staff.
 4. **Greater staff/student collaboration** – to improve communication around what work needs to be done, including closer working between students’ unions and university management.
 5. **An intersectional approach** - acknowledging how gender intersects with other features of identity relevant in local contexts, including class, ethnicity and case.
 6. **Emphasis on curricula *and* pedagogy** – recognising the importance not only of whose ideas are taught, but how.
 7. **Recruitment of female faculty members** – recognising the importance of role models for female students.
 8. **Challenging established theories** - drawing from a wider range of more diverse and up-to date texts and resources.
 9. **Equalising Admissions policies opportunities** – to tackle participation inequalities.
 10. **Literacy campaigns** - to eradicate illiteracy among young women.

Conclusions

The research has given us valuable insights into presences and exclusions of gender awareness and sensitivity in university curriculum content and pedagogical approaches. The diverse country contexts and academic disciplines we represent each have their own particular challenges and opportunities for gender to be included and excluded in university

teaching and learning, alongside other imperatives that are more widely shared. Across these diverse contexts we have learned much that is transferable beyond the immediate to effective knowledge-sharing for more equitable higher education learning experiences. These insights encompass aspects of the higher education classroom experience from whose thinking features in disciplinary canons of expertise; through to the teaching case studies, examples and illustrations selected by higher education teachers; and which students are shown time and respect in classrooms.

Developing understanding around how gender awareness and sensitivity are included and excluded within different higher education classroom contexts across countries and disciplines is vital to improving the learning context as a safe and productive learning space for all. It is also essential to achieving multiple wider United Nations Social Development Goals (SDGs). It has been key to our research insights and the ethos of collaboration and equity of voice that we have worked to foster, that we have been able to engage with a range of different voices.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been an ever-present companion of this research. Our developing understanding around the higher education learning classroom, features and challenges of this, cannot be extricated from the specific immediate wider context of continuing higher education learning amongst the conditions and constraints of this global phenomenon.

We hope that other universities will join us in this international collaborative learning project, carrying out their own targeted auditing of gender inclusion and sensitivity within learning contexts. Beyond this we hope that the questions we have begun to ask in this research and the insights generated by our participants may be seen to have wider relevance for other organisational contexts beyond higher education.

Project Introduction

Gender on the Higher Education Learning Agenda Internationally (GOTHELAI) is funded by the British Academy under the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) through a targeted programme stream 'Humanities and Social Sciences Tackling Global Challenges.' The research includes teams at universities in five partner countries: India, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Nigeria and the UK. The GCRF sets out with a remit that includes to *'strengthen capacity for research, innovation and knowledge exchange in the UK and developing countries through partnership'* (GCRF 2021). The key thread unifying our research team is expertise and commitment around gender equality and feminist approaches across disciplinary and international contexts, with the shared agenda of co-constructing more equitable futures. In line with the priorities of the GCRF, we are committed to the importance of equality in gender and education for its own sake, but also for the importance of this to wider processes of equality, democratisation and development for all across wider, interrelated social, economic and political spheres.

The research set out to answer four core questions:

1. Where is gender present and absent in the curriculum focus and approach of the five institutions?
2. How is gender presented as an issue and awareness in curriculum focus and approach across the five institutions?
3. Which individuals, values and agendas are driving the inclusion, rejection and co-opting of gender as a curriculum focus and approach across the five institutions?
4. What are the challenges and opportunities in developing more gender equitable approaches in curriculum?



This report has been informed by five independent country studies. In addition to our identified research questions, this case study approach is united by a shared methodological approach (discussed further below). This combined an analysis of surveys undertaken with student and staff across Social Sciences, Sciences and Arts and Humanities departments within our respective institutions, as well as structured interviews with selected staff and students representing these departments. Within this report we have sought to provide an insight into the unique contexts of each country, in order to demonstrate how the inclusion of gender into higher education teaching and learning cannot be understood outside of the context within which it occurs.

In this report we seek to synthesise our key findings from across the different country contexts and in doing so to identify where international synergies exist which have relevance for mainstreaming gender in higher education on an international scale, as well as where there are contextually specific challenges or opportunities. We reflect upon challenges and limitations to this research alongside presenting key recommendations for a greater engagement with gender in approaches to higher education teaching and learning, identifying avenues for future work on this important topic.

Background to gender and higher education in international contexts

Gender equality in international contexts

The five international case study contexts making up this research represent a range of priorities and challenges relating to advancing gender equality. These challenges are underpinned by particular historical contexts, geo-political challenges and policy contexts. What the case studies share, however, is the imperative to address persistent gender inequalities pertaining to education as well as to the wider social milieu.

In the last year **India's** gender gap has increased from 62% to 68% overall (WEF 2021). According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2021), India stands at 140th for gender equality among 156 countries, slipping 28 positions from 2020. India has a high Economic participation and Opportunity gap, with less than a quarter of women participating in the labour market; and less than a third of technical roles held by women. Women earn only 20% of male earnings. The country ranks 51 for political empowerment, and also has high Health and Survival inequalities for girls and women. A third of women are illiterate in India, which ranks 114 out of 156 countries for educational attainment inequalities. Factors leading to women dropping out of school include lack of basic amenities like separate washrooms, safe and hygienic classrooms, and secondary schools in close vicinity. Additional factors including early marriage, responsibility for household chores, domestic abuse, and a lack of resources which pose additional barriers (WEF 2021). Nevertheless the percentage of girls making a successful transition from primary to secondary school stands at 91.1% (2018), surpassing boys by 0.5%. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2021). The Gross Enrolment Ratio at Tertiary Level shows an annual increase in the number of female students from 20.1% in 2011 to 30.2 % in 2019. However, there persists a substantial gender gap in higher education participation which the government is trying to address by offering multiple welfare schemes.

Women have traditionally held low social status in **Kazakhstan's** culture (Abdikadyrova et al., 2018). Kazakhstan's membership of the Soviet Union entailed adoption of new rules around gender equality including in terms of equal access to education, health care and work (CohenMiller *et al.*, 2021). Today, Kazakhstan ranks number 80 in the world for overall gender equality, including number 47 in Economic Participation and 55 for Health and Survival. Women's Political Empowerment in Kazakhstan remains low at 106 (WEF 2021).

There is gender parity in access to schooling and women are the predominant teaching staff in higher education. Overall Kazakhstan sits at number 116 globally on gender equality in educational attainment (WEF 2021). That said, there remain limited leadership positions filled by women in academia in Kazakhstan (Kuzhabekova and Almukhambetova, 2017). Multiple conflicting expectations are imposed on Kazakhstani women in the academy, with obligations to maintain 'Western' behavior with colleagues and managers, for example with regards to independence and accountability, and to maintain traditional family norms when at home (Kuzhabekova and Almukhambetova, 2017). Thus, while women have *access* to higher education and to teaching professions, there are problems with movement through the academic pipeline with an overshadowing of women's knowledge in favor of men in both formal and informal settings (CohenMiller and Lewis, 2019; CohenMiller *et al.*, 2020).

Morocco ranks 144th out of 156 countries in the WEF 2021 Global Gender Gap Report. This recent report indicated that only 23.4% of women participate in the labor force, compared to the MENA average of 31%.on the Global Gender Equality Index (WEF 2021). Morocco's traditionally patriarchal structure (Llorent-Bedmar et al., 2017) informs persistently prevalent gender inequality in most Moroccan urban and rural areas. From Moroccan independence until the end of the 1990s, gender equality was mainly the work of human rights activists, alongside some political parties. From 1998, government-led reforms as part of wider democratisation, human rights and public freedoms have elevated women's social, political and economic emancipation and status.

Morocco is 113 on the Global Gender equality Index for Women's Political Empowerment (WEF 2021). Thanks to a quota system, 2021 elections saw 96 women elected to parliament out of 395 seats, the highest ever in Morocco. However only one woman was elected as President of a Region out of a total of 12 Regions in these recent elections. Morocco is 148 on the Global Gender Index for Women's Economic Participation (WEF 2021). Women have consistently made up below 27% of the actively employed population from 2000-2019, with little movement (HCP, 2014; HCP, 2020), while at home women spend 79% of their time on domestic responsibilities compared to 12% for economic activities (HCP 2012).

Morocco is 116 for educational attainment gender equality (WEF 2021). The literacy rate of the population aged 10 years and over increased from 38.1% in 2000 to 58.5% in 2019 for women, against 62.4% in 2000 to 77.1% in 2019 for men (HCP, 2014; HCP, 2020). The same data shows low participation of women in working and economic life. The proportion of unemployed people who are women has increased from 25.6% 2000 to 35.0% in 2019.

Nigeria is number 139 overall in the Global Gender Equality Index, including 104 for Health and Survival and 149 for women's political empowerment. Nigeria's overall gender gap has widened since last year, driven by economic participation and financial resource inequalities, with women earning 58% of men's incomes. Nigeria is 146 of 156 countries for educational attainment, with a particularly high primary education gender equality gap, with only 58% of girls in primary school compared to 70% of boys (WEF 2021). Gender equality remains a concern in Nigerian higher education. Gender inequality persists in relation to gaps in student enrolment alongside wider gender discriminatory practices (MDG Monitor, 2015; Aina et al., 2015; Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020). The Nigerian government has enacted various policies geared towards attaining gender equality in education at all levels. Nevertheless wide gender disparities in university admissions and outcomes persist in Nigeria.

The **UK** ranks number 23 in the Global Gender Equality Index. However gender equality remains a challenge. The UK is number 23 for women's Political Empowerment and 40 for Educational Attainment, but only 110 for Health and Survival (WEF 2021).

The UK is number 55 of 156 countries for women's economic participation. 2020 employment rates were 71.8% for women and 78.2% for men; the lowest gap since recording in 1971. However, women remain less likely to hold senior and managerial positions compared to men (WEF 2021) and women from minority ethnic groups have an unemployment rate of 10.6%, in contrast to women from a white ethnic group at 4.0%. Economic restructuring and manufacturing decline have driven new family and social relationships. Over the last decade, the gender pay gap in the UK has considerably fallen but for full time workers still favours men for all occupations. Men continue to hold more senior roles whereas 30 per cent of women are in the lowest paid quartile and 20 per cent in the highest paid. For men these numbers are reversed. The 'motherhood penalty' (Costa Dias et al, 2020) of gender differences in full-time and part-time paid work rates after childbirth importantly drives hourly wage differences.

The 2010 Equality Act is the key legal instrument for equality in the UK, banning unfair treatment and working to achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and wider society. This reflects a shift in the UK to broaden mainstreaming frameworks, requiring 'public bodies to address a complex range of inequalities including but not limited to gender' (Hankivsky and Christoffersen, 2011:31). In 2011, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was established, with the intention of requiring public authorities to eliminate discrimination across nine protected characteristics - age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

National higher education contexts

India's university system commenced in the 5th century. The wider development of higher education institutions dates to the late 1800s when three provincial universities were established in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, laying the foundation for the modern education system in India. Currently, there are a total of 981 Universities in India. Among these only 3 percent or 13 out of 431 Universities in India have women Vice-Chancellors (Kumar 2015).

At the time of India's Independence from British rule in 1947, India had a 16% literacy rate, while women's literacy rate was just 8.9%. By the 2011 Census, the literacy rate had gone up to 74% with women's literacy rate at 65.5%. Total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 37.4 million with 19.2 million males and 18.2 million females constituting 48.6% of the total enrolment (Ministry of Human Resource Development 2019). Since 1947, the Indian government has brought in several schemes and measures to bridge this gap including the Right to Education Act 2009; *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Education for all); and UGC's Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child at the Postgraduate level (2006). The government also has schemes for single girl-children, for example *Sukanya Samridhi Yojana* (Girl-child Welfare Plan) which intended to meet the education and marriage expenses of a girl child through annual government contribution (NSI 2013). Other regional and government support schemes target support for students including women from low castes and underprivileged economic backgrounds to ensure inclusivity at the level of higher education. However, there is a need to enforce these schemes more comprehensively to ensure that more students can pursue higher education successfully.

During the Soviet Union, higher education in **Kazakhstan** was planned centrally including educational programs and curriculum standards, with free training and research carried out at research institutes (Jumakulov and Ashirbekov, 2016). After gaining independence in 1991, a number of reforms were carried out in the education system of Kazakhstan with Higher Education Institutions beginning to integrate into the global academic network (Kuraev, 2014).

Echoes of USSR policy remain visible, including a highly centralized, unified education system based on well-defined curricula and assessment approaches (Gimranova *et al.*, 2021).

In 2010, a notable comprehensive reform was proposed for the entire Kazakhstani education system to align with international standards by joining the Bologna Process (Gimranova *et al.*, 2021). Since then, changes have taken place, such as the implementation of a credit system, a three-level system of higher education (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral studies), and academic mobility programs (Dzhumabayeva, 2017; OECD, 2015). Due to market demands, the number of universities increased more than three-fold from 1991- 2005 to a total of 181 (Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, 2014).

The total number of Kazakhstani students in higher education in 2016-2017 was approximately 420,000 ranging in age from 18-29, with about 50% women (MNE, 2017). While inclusive educational spaces are being emphasized in Kazakhstan, a lack of understanding (Makoelle, 2016) around how to create inclusive Higher Education Institutions persists.

Higher education development in **Morocco** has escalated since independence in 1955. In 1955 there were only 2000 university students in the country, most of whom were foreigners. Only 22 of these students were Moroccan women (Zouaoui, 2005). There followed a long and progressive process of creation, extension and decentralization of Moroccan higher education, during which the proportion of women increased at an annual rate of 15% compared to 11% for men (Mellakh, 2000). Women rose from 1% of university students in 1956 (Zouaoui, 2005) to over 50% in 2020-2021 (DSSI, 2021). Morocco's university sector is divided into public and private institutions. Public Higher Education Institutions host 95% of Morocco's students; the 148 public institutions registered 280,498 new students in 2020-2021 (DSSI, 2021). Today only 1.44% of students in these universities are international (DSSI, 2021). Beyond this Morocco has a sector of private universities, public-private partnerships, and one Public University privately managed (DSSI, 2021). These universities are 17.56% international students (DSSI, 2021).

Women now make up around three quarters of higher education administrative staff, and 50% of senior executives (DSSI 2021). However, women represent only 29.58% of permanent teaching staff in Moroccan public universities, and 31.63% of the total teaching staff in the private university sector. Positions of responsibility and decision-making are still dominated by men.

Initiatives which seek to provide more opportunities for women within Higher Education Institutions have recently emerged. Further, the Moroccan Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training 2012 Service Contract with the European Union aimed at a support strategy for the institutionalisation of gender equality in the education system in Morocco. Three axes constitute this strategy: institutionalization of the concepts of equality and gender; development of gender communication strategy and tools; and gender responsive budgeting. Morocco has also set up gender education courses in Moroccan universities, reflecting commitment to advancing gender equality.

Nigerian tertiary education started in 1948 with the establishment of the University College, Ibadan, followed by the first indigenous university, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1960. There are now 170 universities nationally (Statista 2020). Nigerian Universities are underfunded, and gender inequality is often not seen as a priority in the context of what are regarded as more pressing problems in African universities (Gunawardana *et. al.* 2005). However gender inequality impacts the Nigerian university system in areas such as student enrolment, staff employment, and administrative policies and programmes. Gender bias and discrimination, including sexual harassment are challenges in Nigerian higher education (see Aina, 2005).

In 2017, 1.7 million undergraduate students and 234 thousand postgraduate students were enrolled in Nigerian universities. A noticeable gender disparity is seen in student's enrolment, with the percentage of females in higher education in Nigeria being only 39.9% (with most of these in the Humanities). The access of females to university education increased from a ratio of 1 to 40 (f/m) in the 1950s, to 1 to 4 (f/m) in 2001. Notably, a wide disparity exists in

traditionally male-dominated disciplines such as the field of Engineering where the ratio is about 1:20 (f/m) (Situation Analysis Report, OAU Ife, 2002).

In Nigerian universities, the number of males admitted into various courses is consistently higher than that of their female counterparts. Proportions of females and males in admissions into Nigerian tertiary institutions lies at 43% to 57% (Amoo 2018). Among Masters students, women accounted for 36 percent of the total, while the female percentage was still slightly lower among Bachelor students (Statistica.com 2020).

University education in the **UK** has traditionally been the domain of white, privileged men (Leathwood and Read, 2009). Successive rounds of major higher education expansion and reform in the 19th century; 1950s and 1960s; and 1992 focused on extending access to previously excluded groups of men or overall access rather than redressing gender imbalance (Hinton-Smith 2012). From the University of London's first acceptance of female students in 1868, there are now more women than men in UK higher education (56.6% compared to 44.1%) but the extent to which women are included equally within this sector requires further scrutiny.

HE in the UK is diverse, with 166 autonomous Higher Education Institutions with their own Governing Bodies responsible for strategic direction, financial health and ensuring effective management. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is responsible for independently monitoring standards and quality in UK HE. In 2019/20 there were almost 2.5 million students in UK higher education (Bolton, 2021: 6). While over half of young people now attend university, large participation gaps remain. There is now a gender disparity among school-leavers applying to university, with female school-leavers 35% more likely to apply for university than their male peers (UCAS 2021).

Women represent 55% of UK higher education staff, but only 29% of Vice-Chancellors and 37% of senior leadership teams. The gender pay gap of staff in universities is 15.9%, compared to a median of 9.7% in other sectors. Of professors, 28% were female in 2019/20.

Institutional case studies

The **India** case study university was established in 2009 as a non-profit global University. In 2019, it was recognised as an 'Institution of Eminence' by the Government of India. At present, it has a faculty-student ratio of 1:8 with 832 faculty members to 6650 students. It has nine schools; three research, capacity building and training institutes; and multiple research initiatives and centres. The University is a research-intensive institution, with more than fifty-five interdisciplinary research centres, and is deeply committed to its core institutional values of interdisciplinarity and innovative pedagogy; pluralism, rigorous scholarship; and globalism and international engagement.

The University currently has 49 percent female students, compared to 51 percent male students, while there are 54% female faculty members compared to 46 percent male faculty members. Recent actions within the University have targeted issues around sexual harassment and gender inclusivity in the university space. The University also has a Gender Studies Group, created in 2015 and a Women and Law Society, founded in 2009, which specifically focuses on issues of discrimination and Gender biases.

The **Kazakhstan** case study university was established in 2010 (Hartley et al., 2015) as the first English-speaking university in the country. The University offers a Foundation Program, 20 undergraduate programs, 25 graduate programs and three doctoral programs with almost 3,000 undergraduate students, approximately 1,000 graduate students and about 750 Foundation students. The University has more women students in Education and the Social Sciences, and more men in STEM; and approximately 30% of the faculty is female. The University's schools have been developed through international partnerships, focused on development of cooperation and partnerships.

The **Morocco** case study university is one of the leading public universities nationally and regionally. The University has 16 higher education establishments, almost 100,000 students,

4 university residences, 217 accredited training courses, 1,649 permanent teachers and an administrative staff of 711 members, Since its creation in 1978, it has grown rapidly, increasing its student numbers, particularly in the early 2010s. It is also a leading scientific and technological center in Morocco.

Women currently make up 51.85% of students at the institution, alongside 25.34% of research professors, and 46.41% of administrative staff (DSSI, 2021). The university has developed an e-learning program, offering a number of online courses to help increase access to education for some of the poorest students in most remote areas in Morocco. A particular goal of this project is to encourage women to complete higher education. Factors including poverty and tribal culture can mitigate against rural women's higher education participation.

In 2019, the University created the first inclusive centre to promote gender and disabilities awareness and equality within Higher Education Institutions. Structures dedicated to supporting students who are victims of gender discrimination are being developed alongside targeted support for specific student learning needs and integration of international students. The University has also participated in the establishment of a Network of Moroccan Universities for Gender Teaching, aimed at sharing inclusive good practices and promoting the importance of gender education in universities.

The case study institution was established in 1948 and is the oldest universities in **Nigeria**, the only institution founded before the country became independent in 1960. It is a federal-controlled public university located in the western part of Nigeria. As of 2018 it had an enrolment of over 41,743 students and staff strength of 5339. The University is made up of 92 academic departments organized into 17 faculties and 15 academic units which act as research institutes. The university has thirteen different colleges or schools, including the Colleges of Medicine, Agriculture and Forestry, Law, Education, Public Health, Veterinary Medicine, and Technology. The largest faculties are in the Social Sciences, the Arts, and Applied Science. The campus also has 13 halls of residence for undergraduate and graduate

students. Other university facilities include a botanical garden, a zoological garden, and the University Media Centre, which houses the campus radio station.

The university is located in one of the most populous cities in Nigeria, with over 6 million people within its metropolitan area. Gender issues have recently entered the mainstream of the university system. The Centre for Gender Mainstreaming in the University has been in the forefront of gender research and advocacy in Nigerian and African universities. In September 2006, the Association of African Universities (AAU) chose the university as the trialling centre for its training modules on Gender Mainstreaming in African higher education. The unit is committed to promoting a gender-sensitive institutional culture and to widen the scope of gender mainstreaming in Nigeria. It is centred on educating and publishing information around gender equality as related to contemporary issues, monitoring and evaluation, mentoring and advocacy, and investigation of gender and sexual harassment issues.

The **UK** case study took place at a research-intensive Higher Education Institution in the South of England. It focused on an institution that was established within the new wave of UK universities founded in the 1960s which sought to pioneer a more progressive approach to higher education, intending to foster an inclusive academic environment encouraging social justice (Gray, 2011). The institution hosts 18,012 students, offering over 500 undergraduate and postgraduate courses and degrees. Of these students, 7,744 identify as female, 6,609 identify as male and 13 identify as neither male nor female. 37% of the male students and 33% of female students identify as being of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) heritage. Of academic staff, 47% identify as female and 53% identify as male, while of 3,194 members of academic and professional services staff, 71% identify as white. There are double the amount of men to women on the most senior academic paygrades and over double the amount of male to female professors.

The university seeks to be international in outlook, approach, student and staff body, but the majority (76%) of students are from the UK or Europe. It attracts staff and students from over

100 countries and nearly a third of staff come from outside the UK. The University's renowned teaching structure was designed to challenge disciplinary distinctions, allowing students to benefit from multidisciplinary teaching with wide 'contextual' knowledge to complement specialist 'core' skills in specific subject area. The University's Centre for Gender Studies, with its own seminar series, focuses upon cultivating and communicating research which explores gender through intersectional approaches, as well as activism on gender debates around contemporary issues. The institution offers five distinctive MA programmes in gender and sexualities and there are over 100 PhD students across the university working on gender-related topics.

Research design

Our approach in this international case study research was one of multi-directional learning (O'Shea 2015) within and between disciplines, institutions and countries; to collaboratively build new understandings and approaches (ILO 2012; CohenMiller and Lewis 2019). The intention of such a cross-national approach is not direct comparison seeking out a most effective approach, but complementary parallel case studies (Hantrais, 2009) as a powerful tool to generate new perspectives on existing challenges through the benefit of what might be learned from each other (Boddy et al. 2013). In line with the principles of our funding through the Global Challenges Research Fund and as feminist researchers, we set out with the aim of collaborative research design from the beginning of the research, as an international, interdisciplinary team. We identified three academic disciplines (one Science, one Social Science, one Arts and Humanities) that were represented within our national case study university alongside all of the other partner universities. Within each discipline we invited teaching staff ($n=7$) and final year undergraduate students (those anticipated to have the most extensive experience of being taught within their university) ($n=7$) to complete an anonymous online survey via the platform Qualtrics. This survey included quantitative and qualitative responses, yielding a total of 42 institutional survey responses. Initial analysis of survey responses informed the design of interview questions subsequently targeted to a sample of four teaching staff (three department Heads and one institutional teaching lead) and three student representatives within each university. Interviews were carried out online via zoom, generating audio recordings and written transcripts which was cleaned up and anonymised for analysis. Analysis themes were agreed between country teams via an iterative process. Data analysis was carried out using Excel for widest international team access. The research received institutional ethical approval.

As suggested in the title of the project, *Co-Creating Equitable Futures*, the methodological processes for this research also aimed towards the co-creation of understanding across country contexts. To that end, country teams worked both independently and as part of the

full international team throughout the data collection and analysis phases. This afforded opportunities to enhance both the co-creation of understanding and the rigour of the study (CohenMiller *et al.* 2022).

Country teams undertook shared data analysis training and undertook collaborative decision-making around research design, data collection and analysis. Across research teams, Research Assistants worked closely and continually together in research training, data collection and analysis, establishing a common baseline and process for all research.



Our analysis involved a process of data extraction from transcripts to Excel file for the qualitative data and descriptive analysis of quantitative data. Emerging findings were initially discussed in meetings with all country teams, sharing insights. Such a process of discussion amongst the full team helped to unpack the meaning of the data. A further step in understanding the data including presenting on the preliminary data at stakeholder meetings. Country teams explained their developing conceptualisation of the data from institutional cases, receiving peer feedback from other country team members and from expert stakeholders. These processes integrated within the methodology echo steps of rigour and quality as suggested by Johnson *et al.* (2020). Individual country reports have

been produced independently by country teams utilising a shared agreed framework, and have been subject to team peer-review. Individual country data has subsequently been examined as a cross-case analysis for this full project report.

Findings

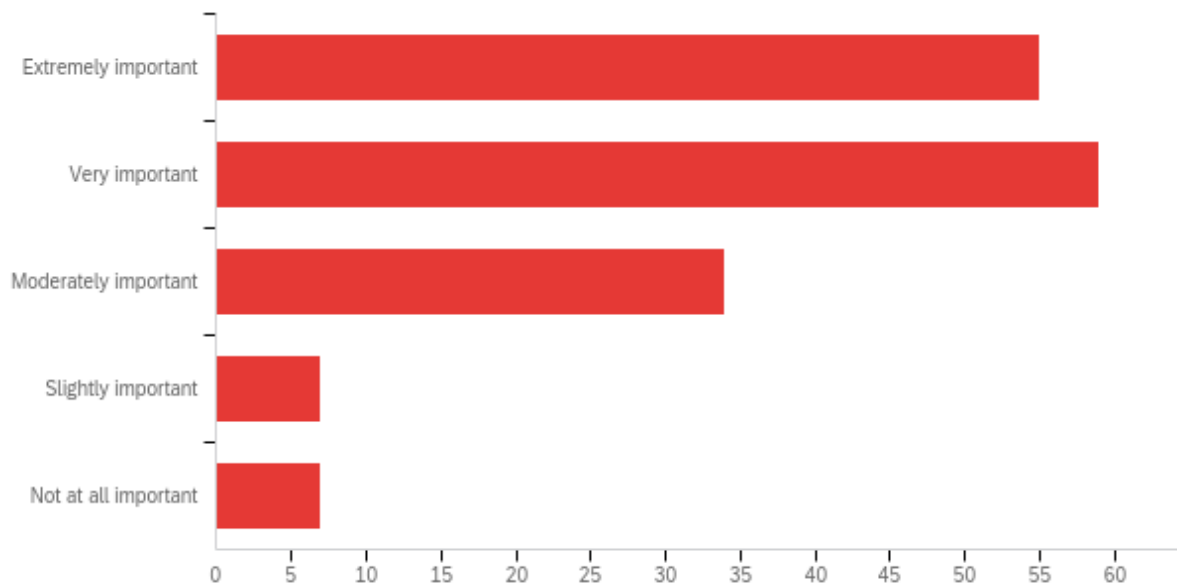
Introduction

The insights drawn from across our five international institutional case studies draw on our quantitative and qualitative survey and interview data to address our four core Research Questions as identified above in this Report. In doing so we identify points of similarity that unify experiences from across the five contexts, as well as key insights specific to each context. These are presented in detail in subsequent sections below.

Overall, 48% of participants identified as male and 48% identified as female. A further 2% identified as 'other' and 2% indicated 'prefer not to say'.

In terms of our first Research Question around the **absence and presence of gender within curriculum focus**, we identified the interconnectedness of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in representing or excluding gender from students' learning experiences within the university case study contexts internationally. Across the research as a whole, students and staff were divided roughly in half regarding whether they see gender as integral to curriculum content and pedagogical approach. Across country contexts many participants expressed that gender was not adequately represented, and/or was not represented equally across academic disciplinary areas. Participants also recognised the relevance of gender equality in higher education teaching to wider social equality imperatives.

Figure 1. Response to question: How important do you think gender is to achieving wider social development goals?



Key emergent imperatives included that the study of gender must not be seen as being only for and about women; the need for representation of women academics in universities and as experts within disciplinary canons of knowledge; and the need and effectiveness of policies to address gender inequalities in higher education teaching. Across country and disciplinary case study contexts, some participants felt that inclusion of gender in higher education teaching is a disciplinary issue not equally relevant to all academic disciplines.

In terms of **how gender is presented as an issue and awareness in curriculum focus and approach** across the case study institutions, participants from all genders and all disciplines in the five studied institutions, agreed that representations of gender in their discipline promote gender equality and awareness, even though it is expressed in various ways. All survey and interview participants from all the studied contexts and disciplines, both male and female, find gender as relevant to teaching and learning in their particular discipline, specifically in the topics that are taught, in the way teachers teach, such as using gender-inclusive examples and materials, in inviting contributions from students of different genders, or in the experts whose ideas are taught and valued. But if a lot has been done in

these matters, some progress still to be done in order to reach a wider focus and a more inclusive approach in higher education programs.

Focusing on **which individuals, values and agendas drive inclusion of gender as a focus and approach**, participants across case studies frequently identified a 'quiet rejection' of the gender agenda in higher education teaching; and that where gender is included, this is largely driven by women. There was however also optimism across case study countries as to the potential for greater integration of gender with the effort of wider university communities. Participants saw gender inclusion as being the responsibility of university teachers (India, Kazakhstan, United Kingdom), management (Kazakhstan and Nigeria) and the whole university community (Morocco). These differences may reflect varying international organisation of higher education curricula, where Nigerian and former-Soviet (Kazakhstan) models have featured more top-down responsibility for curricula.

In exploring the **challenges and opportunities in developing more gender equitable approaches** in curriculum, international case studies identified the challenge posed by pervasive cultural values and beliefs counter to gender equality; lack of time and teacher inclination; and lack of adequate policies (at department, university and national levels); to promote gender inclusion emerged as particularly salient across country contexts. Many participants indicated gender inclusion to be challenging to achieve including in India (90%), the UK (83%), and Kazakhstan (75%). Further identified challenges included lack of teacher curriculum control and expertise; lack of student interest; and gender composition of departments. This varied across case study contexts; in the UK for example teachers were seen as having high levels of control to determine curricula, but were also seen as often lacking the necessary will to embed gender in inclusive ways.

Despite these identified challenges participants nevertheless also identified opportunities for the greater inclusion of gender.

1. Where is gender present and absent in the curriculum focus and approach of the five institutions?

Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are all interconnected with gender and require a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how gender impacts identities of learners and staff in their engagement with various aspects of classroom experience. In this section, we explore how participants from the five institutions perceive the presence and absence of gender in curriculum focus and approach in higher education. More than 50% participants across the five institutions, including both students and faculty, agreed that gender should be an integral to content and approach. Participants in Kazakhstan, India and Nigeria identified that while gender was present, it was not adequately addressed in their respective curricula. The UK did not share this perspective though participants indicated that experts with diverse gender identities were not well represented. The majority of participants from Morocco indicated gender to be important, especially when it comes to achieving wider social development goals such as economic development and democracy. Participants from India and Nigeria also identified that some disciplines are associated with one gender and that this needs to change. Participants across countries expressed the need for gender to come to be seen as more relevant across disciplines and pedagogic practices.

Figure 2. Response to question: To what extent do you see gender as relevant to teaching and learning in HE in the following academic disciplines?

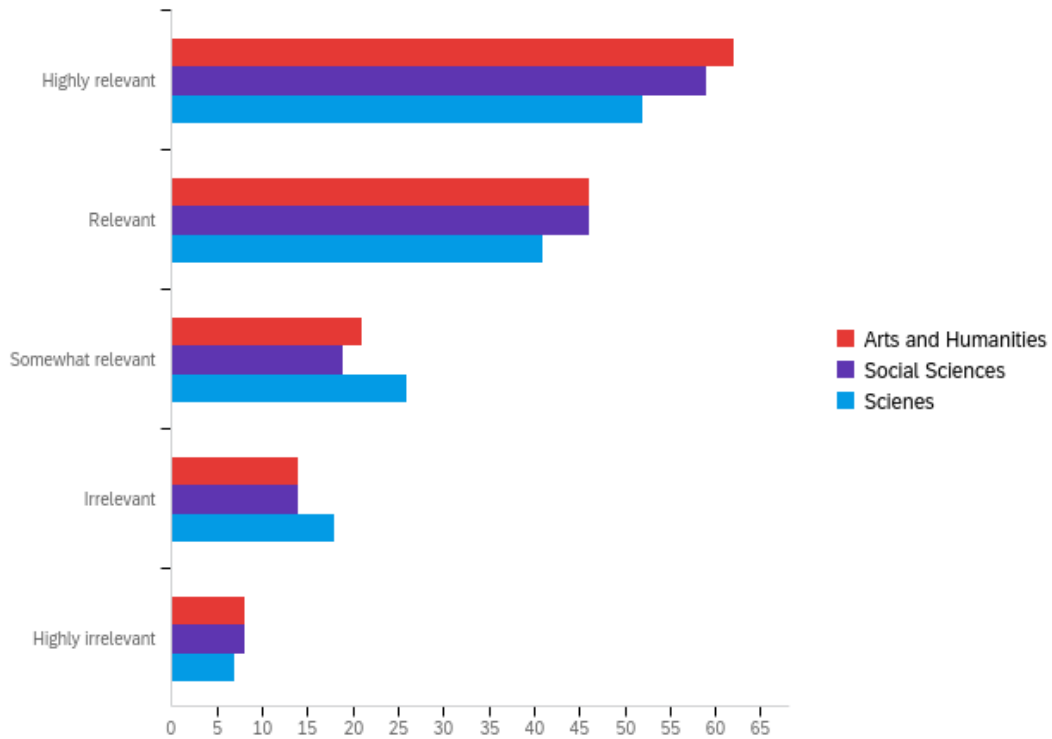
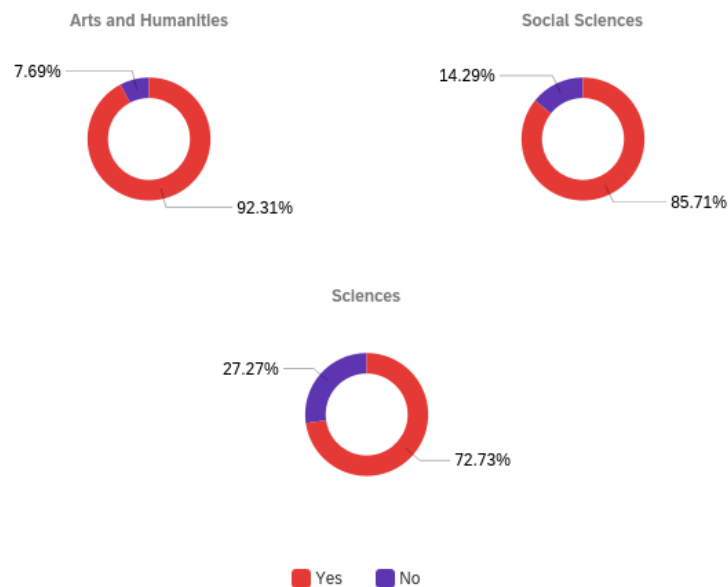


Figure 3. Response to question: Would you like Gender to be more fully represented and explored within your discipline?



Given below are more specific responses from each country context.

India

On the issue of pedagogy, 23 out of 37 interview participants indicated that gender was adequately represented in their respective field. About 31 out of 42 participants, both male and female, across the three disciplines believed that it is primarily the teachers' approach that determines inclusion of gender. This suggests the importance of teachers' position and approach to fostering gender equitable spaces and futures in given topic or discipline areas.

Around 90% of participants from Humanities and Social Sciences identified gender as being "highly relevant" to their discipline while only 60% thought it relevant to the Sciences. Almost half of participants including students and staff in both interviews and the survey, identified that inclusion of gender in higher education should be discipline and topic-specific. Half of participants identified that gender should be an integral part of all students' higher education experiences. Students across the three disciplines agreed that some disciplines lack adequate discussion around gender issues. Arts and Social Science students identified emphasis on separate designated courses focusing on Gender Studies as an 'exclusionary approach' since it is mostly women who sign for these courses. As the UK Social Science faculty identified, this is a problematic assumption because it suggests that only women need be concerned with the study of gender.

Kazakhstan

While some participants identified gender as being formally a part of the learning and teaching strategy, it was nevertheless often seen as insufficiently covered in the curriculum. Both staff and students identified gender to be primarily discipline-dependent and not relevant to some courses and disciplines. For example, one Social Science student stated, *'I don't think gender is important in my discipline'*, and one Arts and Humanities faculty member similarly noted, *'I don't see gender as relevant to teaching and learning in my discipline.'*

Some participants identified the presence of gender in specific elective modules rather than being incorporated across courses. Some identified gender inclusion as being present in the proportion of male and female faculty in their programmes, through the gender of the authors whose readings were included in their course. Some participants indicated that some disciplines were highly male-dominated because of the faculty who taught those courses or the authors of readings/textbooks that were prescribed. An Art and humanities faculty indicated that more diverse teaching staff were needed both as faculty, and as authors of texts that were taught on syllabi.

In contrast, some students and staff described perceiving no problems related to gender. As one participant observed: *'It's not clear to me why gender should receive greater attention than other sociological phenomena such as class'*. Moreover, participants indicated that there was often no clear understanding of the relevance of gender to teaching approaches. Other participants while reporting the absence of gender discrimination in the classroom, also identified that gender is not taken into account. A lack of university-wide policy on gender inclusivity in learning was identified, and that gender inclusion is instead largely left to the discretion of individual teachers.

Morocco

Two-thirds of survey participants identified gender as being very or extremely important to achieving wider social development goals such as democracy and economic development. One of the interviewees, a male senior manager in the University staff, identified that in order to improve the level and quality of education in Morocco, it is imperative to provide equal opportunities by including gender in all projects and strategies. The majority of participants indicated that in their discipline gender is relevant to teaching and learning. This included observations of teachers actively utilising gender-inclusive examples or inviting contributions from students representing different genders.

One male Social Science teacher identified the higher number of women students as compared to men students to be an indication of how successful national education policies have been in making higher education gender inclusive. When asked if gender was adequately represented in their field, 65% of the survey participants indicated that it was effectively represented in the subject content and what is taught; 56% see it as represented in the experts whose ideas are taught; while 71% indicate gender to be represented in the teaching style and approach to teaching. One interviewee, a male senior manager, identified that various initiatives are being undertaken at different levels of the University to improve gender diversity and inclusivity including in teaching. Both students and staff agreed and recognised that gender is becoming an important part of curriculum focus and approach, with courses and activities related to gender being developed even though it was indicated that some issues still need to be addressed.

Nigeria

Participants from the humanities predominantly agreed that gender issues are represented in subject content as well in the approach to teaching adopted by faculty. In terms of where gender is present in the curriculum, responses from staff identified a frequent absence in the curriculum in terms of gender. Some participants indicated that the curricula in Social Sciences should include more gender sensitive focus. This was seen as in need of being tackled at both the theoretical and practical levels. Around 42% of participants agreed that gender should be an integral part of all students' higher education. It was also observed that there was need to include gender related topics in the teaching curriculum as well as the sensitivity to gender in teaching style. Participants also identified the role faculty played in making classroom spaces gender inclusive with one female Social Science student observing: *'Gender is present in my classroom because the lecturer tends to carry everyone along and encourage female students to answer questions and speak up if he or she sees one of the genders being passive'*.

UK

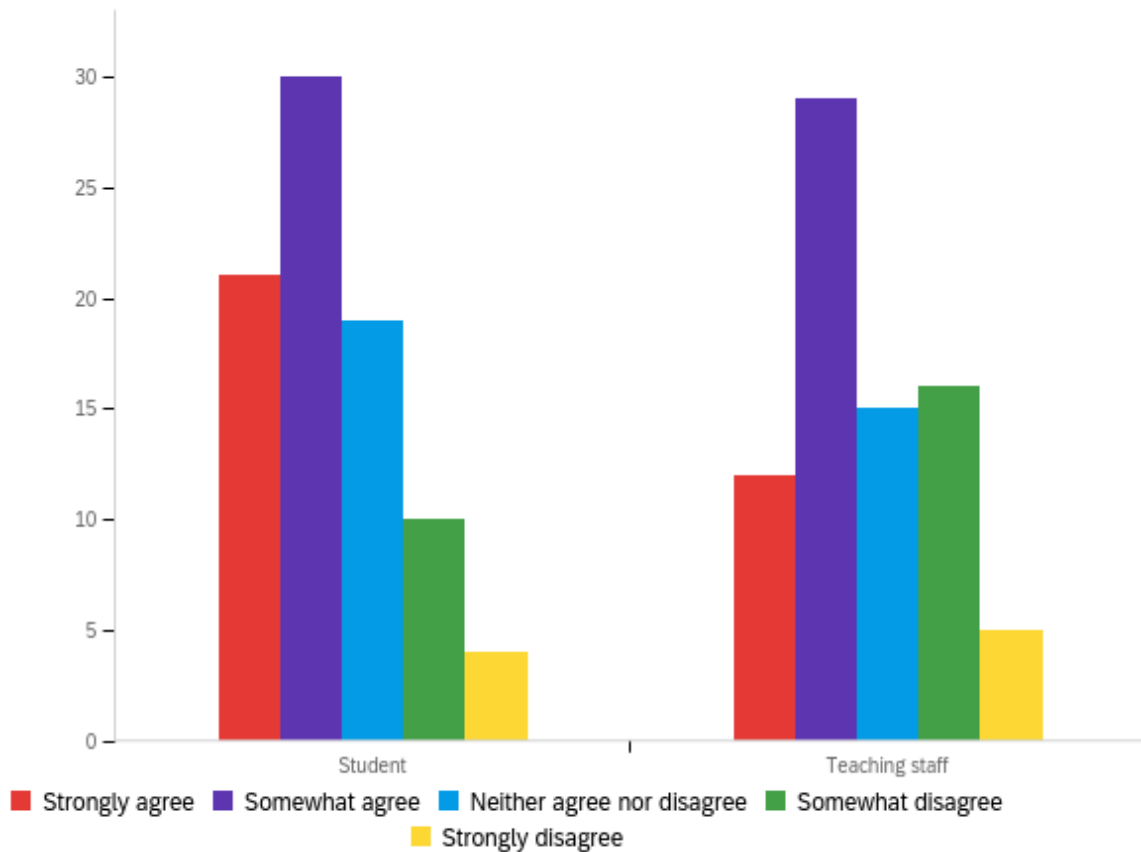
The majority of participants indicated that the pedagogic style and approach to teaching of adequately represented gender; however, they observed that gender was not sufficiently represented in terms of the experts whose ideas were taught. It was identified as the responsibility of individual teachers to make a curriculum gender inclusive. As an example, a female Social Sciences student shared that only one out of the nine professors who taught her had made the effort to include different gendered identities in the case studies they provided students (UK Social Science Student). On the other hand, the UK survey identified male students to perceive the teaching style and approach to teaching to adequately represent gender.

84% of participants affirmed that they would like gender to be more fully represented within their discipline while 79% indicated that gender should be *'integral to content and approach throughout all learning'* while around 10% identified that gender should not be taught at all. One senior female teaching lead believed that not all members of teaching staff, particularly from the Sciences, considered inclusion of gender as relevant to their particular field.

2. How is gender presented as an issue and awareness in curriculum focus and approach across the five institutions?

The majority of participants, from all genders and all disciplines in the five studied institutions, agreed that representations of gender in their discipline promote gender equality and awareness, even though it is expressed in various ways.

Figure 4. Response to question: Do you think representations of gender in your discipline promote gender equality?



Survey and interview participants of all genders, disciplines and countries in the research identified gender as relevant to teaching and learning in their discipline, including in terms of the topics taught, and the way teachers teach, such as using gender-inclusive examples and materials, inviting contributions from students of different genders, and in the experts whose ideas are taught and valued.

Figure 5. Response to question: In what ways, if any, do you see gender as relevant to teaching and learning in your discipline?



The way gender is and should be presented in curriculum was identified variably within the research. In India, there was identification of the power of countering gendered boundaries by approaching gender experientially so that it becomes a part of everyday discourse without being tied to a particular course or classroom interaction. In Kazakhstan, almost all women participants expressed that gender should be part of all students' higher education experience, while the majority of men perceived either that gender should not be included

in teaching and learning at all, or that this should be dependent on academic discipline. In Morocco, the majority of participants perceived gender as an issue to be understood in its own right, with a third identifying further that this should be considered in a relational way to other aspects of identity including age, disability, ethnicity and religion. In Nigeria, most science and social science participants perceived their curriculum as gender inclusive, while those from the Humanities were more likely to see gender as an issue of teacher interest. Finally, in the UK context, gender was perceived by many to be the responsibility of everyone in the university community, including both staff and students.

India

In terms of how gender is seen as relevant to teaching and learning in their particular discipline, both male and female participants across all the three disciplines gave most priority to pedagogy, followed by topics that are taught and finally the experts whose ideas are taught. All Social Science participants and half of Science and Arts and Humanities participants identified the importance of whose ideas are taught. Only two participants saw gender as being irrelevant to their discipline.

Many participants observed that in the Indian context, gender equality in higher education learning is usually seen as being an issue of inclusion of more women, either as students, faculty or experts. However, disciplines themselves are identified as being marked with gender; for instance, there are more women in history and literature programs both as students and teachers while pure sciences are dominated by male faculty and students. A senior faculty member with several decades of experience in universities internationally observed that 'departments of natural sciences tend to push back against the inclusion of gender in their curriculum.' While agreeing to the need for gender to be part of the curriculum and for improving representation, student and staff participants of different genders from Science maintained there to be insufficient scope or space within their

discipline to include gender as a framework of analysis. Hence while committing in theory to a more egalitarian education institution, in practice they feel unable to create space for it.

More positively, Social Science faculty identified how making connections between classroom learning and life outside the classroom can enable students to relate theories to their lives and gain better understanding of their own situations by drawing from theories. This is important given identification by one female social science student that restricting gender teaching to Gender Studies as a course or discipline does not make society more aware or sensitive to gender because it is not making 'the Other' aware of the discrimination faced by some.

Kazakhstan

While both students and staff, in general, see gender as important, there were different views on how extensively focus should be embedded in curriculum, and where. Some saw it as important to incorporate gender awareness into curriculum earlier than higher education, in high school and even as far as kindergarten learning.

The majority of women (62.5%) but only a quarter of men identified gender as being extremely important in achieving wider social development goals, such as democracy and economic development. Most women (83%) considered that gender should be part of all students' higher education curriculum experience, with less than 10% of all men agreeing. Instead, the majority of men (60%) identified either that gender should not be included in teaching and learning, or that this should be dependent on academic discipline.

Women were much more likely to perceive the relevance of gender to teaching and learning in the topics that are taught (73% compared to 20% for males); in the way teachers teach, such as using gender-inclusive examples, inviting contributions from students of different genders (65% compared to 26% for males); or in the experts whose ideas are taught and valued (73% compared to 9% for males).

Some faculty (both men and women) identified that more could be done to address gender, while students identified the need to update curriculum.

Morocco

In recent decades the Moroccan government has committed to increasing equality of access to education for all including in terms of gender. One research participant identified this cultural change as having been important to contributing to rising gender awareness including in terms of higher education teaching and learning. Half of male and female survey participants agreed and a quarter somewhat agreed that representations of gender in their discipline promote gender equality.

Participants also identified the importance of communication in terms of gender awareness. It was identified that staff members often use gender specific language when referring to women colleagues and students. One male member of staff from Sciences identified that they try to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes including through selection of pedagogical material and in the choices of examples and images they use in their teaching. Staff from the Arts and Humanities saw this as being more of a challenge given what they identified as a prevalence of men in historically powerful positions:

'This problem exists, we have a few women and if we give a class on a woman who has really been praised during the history, it becomes something extraordinary.' (Morocco Arts and Humanities Male Staff)

Participants perceived understanding around the need to mainstream gender to be more developed in universities in Morocco compared to other sectors. While most participants perceived that gender should be integrated in most modules and activities, this varied in terms of perceptions around how this should be done. Half of participants identified that gender equality should be a focus in its own right within higher education, while a third

perceived that it must be related to other aspects of identity such as age, disability, ethnicity and religion.

Nigeria

Responses from staff and students recognised gender as an issue and awareness in the University curriculum focus and approach in significant ways but with some differences. When participants were asked '*In what ways if any do you see gender as relevant to teaching and learning in your discipline?*', 61% of male participants perceived gender as being relevant in terms of topics taught.

Most participants in sciences and social sciences perceived their curriculum as being inclusive of gender, although not across all courses. One Science Female Staff responded that: 'It has never been a major consideration besides the curriculum is flexible and as such both genders can blend without difficulties.'

A greater percentage of participants from the Arts and humanities identified that gender in higher education should primarily be based on teacher interest, seeing this as being the responsibility of individual staff to develop discussion around. Participants were most likely to perceive their female lecturers as working to include gender in their teaching. An example given of a gender inclusive approach was class group work activities with each group usually made up of both genders (Nigeria Science Female student).

While it was identified that departments have recently introduced more gender-focused and inclusive courses, one Arts and Humanities Female Student described how there remains little representation of the role of women generally, with for example few important women historical figures, experts and theorists taught about. Some teaching staff identified that they include gender issues in their courses content if they consider it relevant but otherwise avoid it if they do not see it as relevant. One Arts and Humanities male staff explained how they do not pay much attention to gender when choosing teaching materials but do try to use gender

inclusive examples and language. One social science male staff identified that his courses are gender neutral so he does not teach with gender in mind. However the same staff member did also acknowledge that there *should* be awareness of gender concerns and balance when instructing students. He saw this as predominantly an issue of gender balance in teaching staff, stating that *'Gender is not present and felt in my department because right now we have only one female among all staff because women do not really apply for teaching positions in my department.'*

UK

The majority of survey participants from all departments identified gender as being highly relevant or relevant to teaching and learning in higher education. Staff and student survey and interview responses identified gender as being presented as an issue and awareness in curriculum focus and approach in varied ways. When asked, 'In what ways, if any, do you see gender as relevant to teaching and learning in your discipline?', male participants were most likely to see the topics that are taught and how people teach (for example using gender inclusive examples) as the most important ways in which gender is relevant to teaching and learning in their discipline, whereas women saw experts whose ideas are taught and valued as being most important. When divided by discipline, those in the Arts and Humanities saw topics taught as most important, while in the Social Sciences which experts whose ideas are taught and valued was seen as more important. This issue of whose ideas are included as expertise in teaching was identified by staff and students across all genders and all disciplines. But participants from the Sciences were most likely to respond that gender is not relevant to teaching and learning in their discipline.

Staff and students participants of different genders and disciplines reflected upon the good practice of teachers who took a broad, holistic approach to gender awareness in their curriculum focus and approach. They pointed out the importance of responsibility for promoting gender aware teaching by colleagues beyond one's own teaching practice. As one

Female Senior Leader stated, *'some of them [university teachers] are really interested in decolonising and really interested in how to better incorporate a feminist view, not just gender not just like let's sprinkle in a couple of stories about famous women, the actual feminist worldview, some of them, really, really are'* (UK Female Senior Leader).

An Arts and Humanities Male Staff member also identified that much of the focus on integrating gender awareness is driven by students in 'student-led topics' learning whereby students are encouraged to identify their own topics of interest and reading resources.

However it was also identified that although there *'has been some progress when it comes to including the research of women scholars as well as women as subjects, more progress could be made'* (UK Arts and Humanities 'Other' gender Staff).

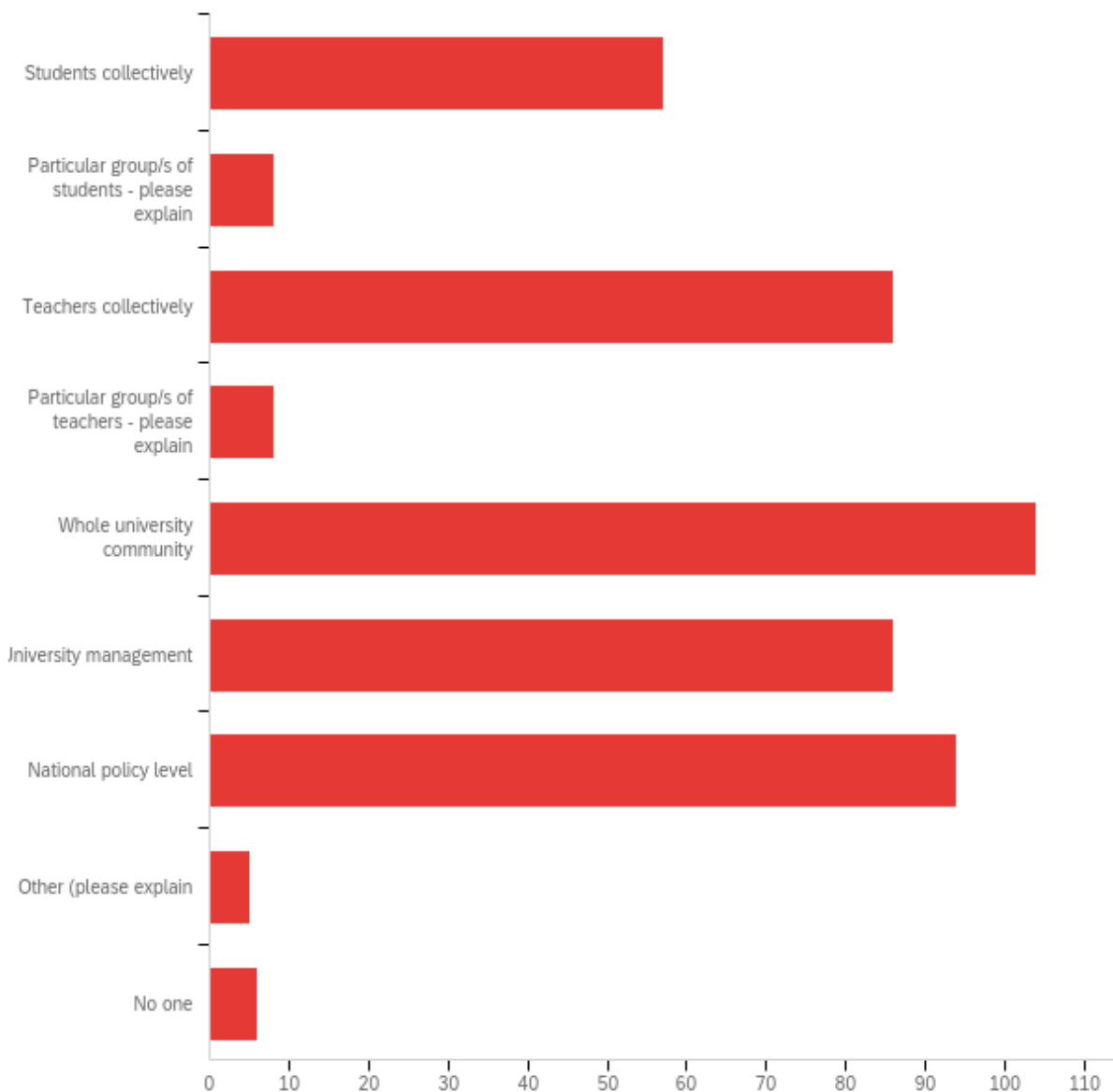
3. Which individuals, values and agendas are driving the inclusion, rejection and co-opting of gender as a curriculum focus and approach across the five institutions?

Most of the participants across all five countries indicated that although there was not an overt rejection of gender-inclusivity, there was a 'quiet rejection' operating at multiple levels. The majority of participants across all five institutions agreed that women usually drive the inclusion of gender at the level of higher education. Some participants from India and Morocco highlighted the limitation of what can be characterised as a patch-work type approach to including gender, and the need for men to be held equally accountable for ensuring a gender-equitable future. The majority of participants felt that the 'whole university community' should take responsibility for including gender.

Participants across all five institutions, both male and female also indicated that the values associated with traditional patriarchal structures pose a great hindrance in the movement toward embedding of gender as a curriculum focus. However, they were also optimistic and

across all five institutions most of them believed in the power of the “collective”, in this case the ‘whole university community’ to make things better not just at the level of awareness but also at the level of implementation as far as the issue of gender-equity in higher education is concerned.

Figure 6. Response to question: Who do you think should take responsibility for including gender in HE teaching and learning?



Given below are more specific responses from each country context.

India

When participants were asked, *'Who takes responsibility in your university for including gender in HE teaching and learning?'*, almost 60% of participants agreed this to be teachers' collectively. One quarter of participants perceived that students collectively take responsibility for the inclusion of gender in higher education.

Five out of 7 interviewees highlighted how women and gender are considered synonymous and men tend to act as 'gender-less' human beings since it seemingly does not affect men. Statements like, *'female students tend to go to female faculty'*, *'women faculty are more interested in gender'*, *'only with women getting into academia, the gender issue was brought to forefront'*, *'the issue of gender is usually taken up by female faculty'*, and *'we need to include more women in positions of power'*, highlight that gender as a category is seen as the responsibility of women. While some participants believed that men should be equally accountable for ensuring gender equality since they were also a part of this spectrum of gender, others tend to (un)knowingly associate gender with women and assign it to them as an area of expertise and responsibility. One of the participants highlighted the limitation of the onus being on a particular cohort to address gender, and that instead we need to focus on the power of the 'collective.'

Kazakhstan

The data shows that the general perception of gender inclusion in higher education teaching and learning is that of a top-down approach. The participants believed that the drive for gender inclusion should come from the university management (20%), and particular groups of teachers (21%). A limited number of participants suggest that responsibility should be addressed by the whole university community (15%), particular groups of students (12%), and students collectively (10%).

Those who have never encountered gender as part of teaching and learning, and men 'as the dominant gender' were seen as least likely to value inclusion of gender: *'People who are not educated about the issue of gender inequality, they kind of reject this [idea of gender]'* (Female student, humanities). Some participants perceived it to be only female students driving the gender agenda. Overall, the onus of incorporating gender inclusion is seen as broadly falling on the shoulders of women and female students.

Morocco

In the case of Morocco, instilling a wider culture of inclusion in the University emerged as a major factor in ensuring gender-equality. This is seen as starting with accepting women as collaborators who bring value to work. Although there has been much progress in this area, the opportunities for women to occupy senior positions remain minimal.

When asked who should take responsibility for including gender in higher education teaching and learning 61% of participants identified the whole university community, 47% identified the national policy level, while the teachers collectively and the University management were identified by 42% and 33% of participants respectively.

Another determinant that, according to participants, can encourage and facilitate girls' access to higher education is the availability of both financial means and the proximity of university infrastructure. One of the interviewees observed that, *'we still have girls who cannot and who do not finish their studies for lack of means and lack of parental and family mentality, especially the illiterate'*. It therefore emerged that investment in interventions to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds is seen as essential for gender inclusion because the majority of girls stop their studies due to distance from the university and the absence of appropriate student accommodation and wider support structures.

Nigeria

The majority (73%) of participants from the Nigerian case study agreed that gender inclusivity aligned with their departmental goals while about 55% of participants agreed it was a priority at the university and national higher educational level respectively.

One female interviewee indicated that women mostly drive the inclusion of gender in her department: *'I think the people mostly affected, the women, drive inclusion and agitate towards gender equality... I have only one female lecturer and she strives to include the idea of gender studies in the courses she handles like the role of women in history. So, people who are mostly affected try to push forward the issue of gender.'*

When the question of who *should* take responsibility for including gender in higher education teaching and learning emerged, most participants felt it should be the university management closely followed by the whole university community, while one participant identified that teachers should be responsible for gender inclusion. Overall, it was identified that gender is not new to university focus and approach but that it still needs to be embedded more effectively and that more awareness needs to be created.

UK

When asked whether they felt that gender inclusivity in teaching represents the values, goals and institutional priorities of their university, 74% of participants said yes. 76% indicated this was a priority of their departments. The minority who did not consider it a priority of their departments came largely from Sciences and Social Sciences disciplines.

Teachers were the group most frequently identified as responsible for driving gender inclusion within UK higher education. Other participants indicated the important role played by students with regards to including gender in higher education teaching and learning, particularly 'political students' and 'student activists' (UK Arts and Humanities Male Staff), with the students union *'making sure that it is a priority that the university deals with'* (UK Female Sciences Student).

While no interview participants indicated that they felt there was any explicit rejection of the inclusion of gender in the curriculum, several participants across genders and disciplines indicated that there was a 'quiet' rejection in the form of what departments took up as a priority, with some members of staff not taking the inclusion of gender seriously, whereby *'they just quietly just ignore it and go on doing what they're doing'* (UK Arts and Humanities Male Staff).

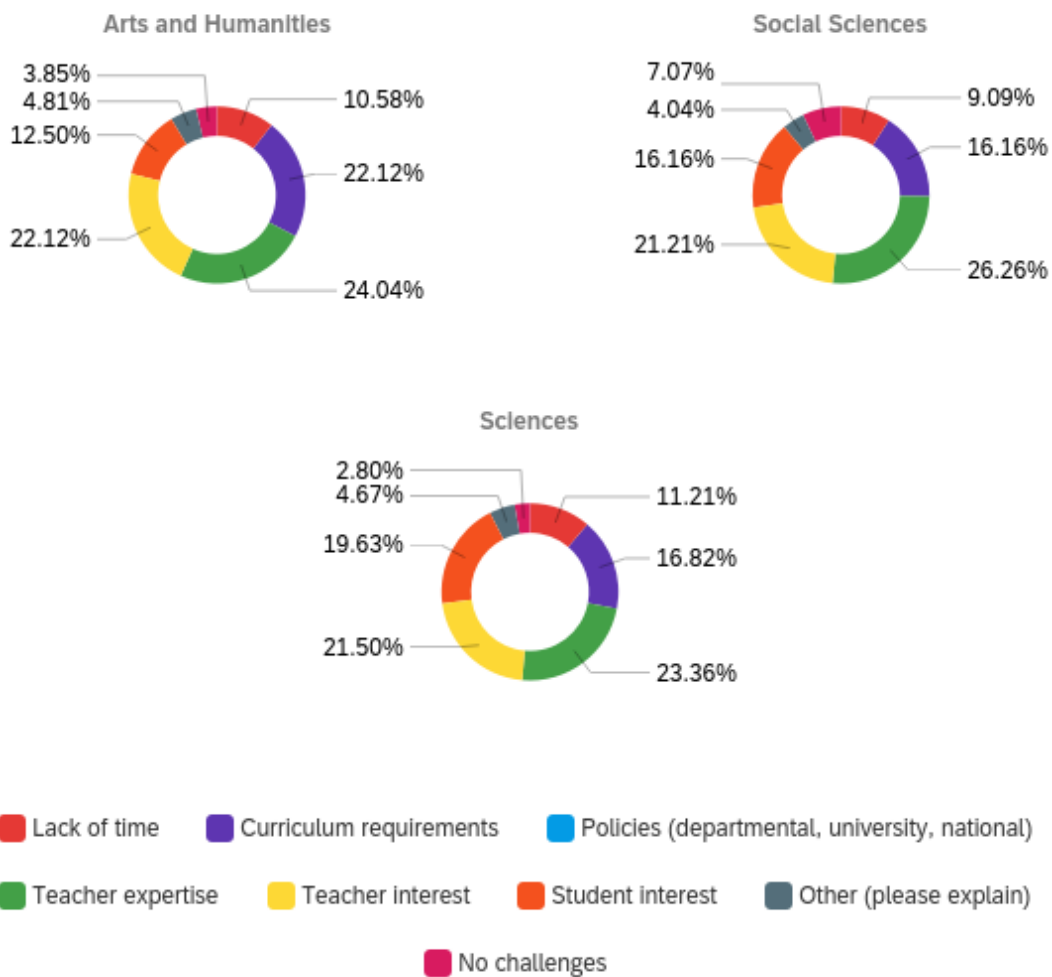
4. What are the challenges and opportunities in developing more gender equitable approaches in curriculum?

Across the country case studies participants identified the presence of gender inequality in curriculum both formal (content and resources as provided in syllabi), and informal (attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors). The challenges in developing more gender equitable approaches in curriculum as indicated by participants are similar across countries and seen as linked to several key factors:

- i) existing system of values and beliefs in society that has a deeply rooted gender bias
- ii) lack of theoretical understanding of the role of gender in curriculum and its value which results in lack of teacher expertise, and lack of teacher and student interests
- iii) lack of policies both at the national and institutional levels that would guide and drive gender inclusion efforts

Despite these challenges there is seen as also being opportunities to drive gender inclusion in curriculum both in and outside the classroom.

Figure 7. Response to question: What are the challenges, if any, of incorporating and representing gender in more equitable ways in HE teaching and learning?



India

In the case of India, more than 90% of participants identified that representing or incorporating gender equality in higher education teaching and learning is challenging. Lack of policies to guide teachers and consequently lack of teacher expertise in this area were

cited as one of the biggest challenges. As a result, teachers are reportedly unwilling or incompetent to incorporate gender in curriculum. The latter leads to flawed representation of gender equality in higher education which raises concerns. However, this is indicated as just the tip of the iceberg rooted in the well-established larger system which comprises *'culture, tradition, national context, patriarchal set-up, and Brahmanical orthodoxy'* in the Indian context (Social Science faculty). Thus, culture and people's mindsets which are historically gender-biased appear to have a great impact on shaping formal curriculum through informal curriculum. This is an issue that participants identified as requiring substantial time and effort to change and appears even more challenging in the light of different views on the role of schooling and education. Universities are often perceived by society as market-oriented and expected to meet the needs of the market. Thus, for the university community, working towards more gender-equitable approaches in curriculum is often seen as an additional demand. Consequently, not all are ready and willing to do so despite opportunities identified by participants. Most participants saw opportunities as not being limited to the classroom, where more fluid and inclusive readings and theories authored by scholars representing different genders could be incorporated. They also envisioned various other dimensions of university spaces as additional opportunities for incorporating gender equity in higher education. This is seen as being supported by a more holistic approach that includes critical analysis of the gender related value systems at home and in society, the position of government and its national policy towards more gender equitable society.

Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, about 75% of participants identified challenges in representing or incorporating gender equality in higher education teaching and learning; however when responses are broken down by gender, it becomes apparent that women are more likely to perceive challenges compared to men. Similarly to the findings from other countries, teacher interest and expertise, student interest, policies (both national and university and department-wide) and lack of time were reported as the key challenges. Other challenges are social constructs, underestimating women and biases against them, stereotypes, social

stigma, mentality and ideology of people, misogyny, and queer phobia. Gender composition of the department is identified by students to influence the way they use or do not use gender in teaching. Some participants described seeing gender inclusion as a threat to meritocracy which they saw as more important than promoting gender equality.

Another important obstacle seen as hindering integration of gender into curriculum is lack of time. Given a perceived lack of policies or regulations to measure or monitor gender inclusion into curriculum, faculty were seen as not taking the initiative to do so on their own as this means extra work and extra responsibility.

Nevertheless, the role of gender in teaching and learning in higher education is increasingly being recognised by all stakeholders. There are a growing number of student and faculty-led co-curricular initiatives that promote gender discussions that extend beyond the classroom and involve the wider university community. Gender conferences, seminars and events that are organised by the university community are also open to the public. These initiatives and developments all contribute important opportunities for developing gender equality focus within and beyond the university.

Morocco

For Morocco the major challenge is seen as lying in the cultural dimension. There is seen as being a strongly rooted perception of the role of women as wife and mother which is shaped by the Muslim religion and by both Arab and Berber culture. Along with society resisting female empowerment, this is seen as placing pressure on women, hindering aspirations and preventing gender equality. Balancing multiple roles when roles other than that of wife and mother are not recognised by society is seen as being difficult for women. In this complex cultural context the challenges of incorporating and representing gender in more equitable ways in higher education teaching and learning come across strongly. Almost half of survey participants identified gender not to be a relevant part of curriculum requirements. Likewise, lack of policies regulating and guiding gender inclusion and representation in higher education at departmental, university and national levels (38% of participants), lack of

teacher expertise (31% of participants) and teacher interest (26% of participants) as well as lack of student interest (24% of participants) were identified as obstacles for incorporating and representing gender in curriculum and teaching and learning in general. Further, many do not consider gender equity in higher education to be a crucial issue, informing an absence of policies or regulations at any levels specifically designed to attract, retain and promote women in higher education. In the absence of role models girls are not encouraged to challenge the existing cultural norms and gender stereotypes.

The potential for progressive change was indicated by the positivity of many responses around the equality of women, the importance of gender to higher education learning, and the potential for embedding this more. It was identified that as numbers of women students in classrooms increases this brings benefits to all. The opportunity to benefit all disciplines by including gender, came from a participant from Environmental engineering. Others identified the opportunity lying in changing the curriculum to include gender more from early childhood education onwards, to embed changed attitudes and understandings. There were also identified opportunities to improve gender awareness by including women more in decision-making at all levels; and increasing numbers of women senior officials and CEOs in Morocco, were seen to serve as positive role models and examples of women's abilities that challenge traditional religious stereotypes.

Nigeria

In Nigeria gender inequalities are seen as being closely interrelated with ethnicity, race and culture. 80% of the study participants identified challenges in developing more gender equitable approaches in curriculum, being: teacher expertise, curriculum requirements, teacher interest, student interest, lack of time and policies. Teachers serve as the main figures in shaping more gender equitable approaches in curriculum and much is seen as depending on their expertise and interest in driving gender equity in their classrooms. However university teachers are seen as not always having as much freedom as their colleagues in some other country contexts in shaping their syllabi, as curriculum

requirements are set centrally by government and gender is not prescribed, so requires additional time not included in the paid workload. The same can be applied to students who reportedly lack interest in gender equality, often due to lack of time. Although lack of policies at the national and institutional level are recognised as a barrier to gender equity efforts, the situation is reportedly improving. However, cultural and religious barriers are still strong.

Participants identified as a positive opportunity in terms of advancing gender equality in higher education teaching that diversity and equality issues are now gaining traction as federal constitution issues in Nigeria. This provides the opportunity for demographic participation inequalities to be considered in admission processes into Higher Education Institutions.

UK

In the case of UK, the existence of challenges in incorporating gender equality in higher education teaching and learning were confirmed by 83% of the participants. 'Teacher interest,' 'teacher expertise,' 'lack of time' and 'student interest' were identified as the main challenges. Teachers appear to have much freedom in shaping their syllabus to include gender, but many do not have interest in embedding gender equality, do not feel confident in doing so, or do not perceive the value of doing so. This is also influenced by some disciplines being historically male-dominated with materials representing dominant gender views and representations, and this appears challenging for incorporating a greater gender focus within curriculum. Thus, the underlying challenge is the 'weight of tradition' (93) which was deemed 'male dominated' (25), 'patriarchal' (94) and not welcoming to females and especially those who come from black and minority backgrounds. With 76% of survey participants favouring engaging with issues related to gender inclusion in higher education in relation to other aspects of identity such as age, disability, ethnicity and religion, gender equity is seen as part of a bigger inclusion conversation and as such it should not be considered in isolation. A further challenge is that gender equity efforts are not visible to the

entire university community as there is seen as being a lack of awareness of gender inclusive teaching and research happening within the university.

In terms of opportunities, participants identified that there are progressive gender inclusive teaching initiatives taking place within the university that are an important resource to learn from, and that need wider knowledge-sharing. Opportunities to engage with gender in intersectional ways that acknowledge wider facets of individuals' identity were also identified. Further key was the high level of autonomy to drive their own curriculum development, identified by staff.

Summary

Our findings have shown both similarities and differences in response to our four central research questions across the five country case studies. One aspect of this is that of differences in understandings around what gender equality in higher education teaching does and should look like, how much it matters, and why. These insights show the importance of us knowledge-sharing across disciplines, institutions and international contexts for identification of good practices and solutions to challenges that can help to improve higher education learning experiences for diverse students. Key to these findings are the persistence of resistance to the gender equality agenda in higher education learning across contexts, through staff and students who see gender as not important to their discipline or as less of an imperative compared to other concerns. This is identified as having the impact of often leaving gender consigned to particular margins of curricula, where it is focused on only by those students and staff who have an interest in it. This leaves some individuals and groups to carry the burden of acknowledging and addressing gender inequality. There is a clear need for acknowledgement that no disciplinary areas or institutions are immune from the challenges of better integrating gender equality in higher education teaching, and through this the imperative of wider sharing of responsibility. While committed individual students and teachers bring much to this agenda and should be listened to as a tool to generating wider good practices, they should not be relied on to take

responsibility for this change. Such responsibility should be led from the top through the commitment of higher education managers, and development of targeted policies, interventions and support at the level of institutions and higher. This is particularly important given identification in the findings that the centrally driven nature of higher education curricula in some country contexts can be an important mediator of level of change.

Challenges and limitations

We are proud as a team of the understandings generated by our collective endeavour, and further development and sharing of these insights remains an ongoing work in progress. However as a team of feminist researchers it is equally important for us to reflect critically on research challenges and limitations, for purposes of transparency to our readers, and as a means to continue to strive towards achieving as strong research integrity and equity as possible.

1. What this study is not about

This research focuses on the university classroom as one particular dimension of the way in which gender inequality can play out in higher education contexts internationally. As a team of feminist researchers we are deeply committed to wider gender equality within the academy, including selection and progression of students and staff; gender inequality in research processes; the university gender paygap; and higher education policies. None of these areas of inequality exists independently, rather being connected in multidirectional relationships. Students and to a greater extent staff participating in this research understandably raised these issues in survey and interview responses. However except where they directly impact or are impacted by gender in terms of the teaching within the classroom, these wider dimensions necessarily remain beyond the scope of this study.

2. Case study approach – opportunities and limitations

The foremost research limitation is that our five country case study approach can only tell us about a small number of international contexts. Beyond this we were further limited. We

gained access to departments within participating universities that saw gender as sufficiently relevant in order to participate, and further that they did not perceive the research as a potential threat in terms of negative exposure. We do not claim to be able to make definitive claims about higher education internationally from these five case studies. Nor do we set out to make hierarchical inferences regarding which international and institutional approaches are better or worse.

We are also aware that our institutional and disciplinary case studies cannot speak for entire national higher education sectors or even entire Higher Education Institutions. Our intention is rather that employing complementary parallel case studies (Hantrais, 2009) can act as a powerful tool to generate new perspectives on existing challenges through the benefit of what might be learned from each other for the benefit of all (Boddy et al. 2013). We perceive that our insights offer useful transferable applications for identifying elements of what might also be the case in further disciplinary, institutional and international contexts with similar features.

Continuing to apply to wider higher education contexts the research and training approaches that we have developed collaboratively as an international team will continue to grow the bank of understanding. This is a task that we hope to continue as a team through future research development. A key aspect of this is our ongoing work to make our tools and insights widely available to colleagues internationally through developing workshops, online resources and wider communication. Through doing so it is our intention that this work continues to grow as a living collaborative exercise to understand and increase attention to gender equality in higher education learning in diverse disciplinary, institutional and international contexts.

3. Diversity as strength and challenge

The diversity of our collaborative team in terms of disciplinary and international contexts is both the greatest strength and challenge of this research. The international research team bring a broad range of perspectives in terms of international and disciplinary contexts, as

well as individual identity characteristics, expertise and perspectives. While this diversity provides the foundations for the richness of the research, it also requires attentiveness to potential for divergent understandings and assumptions. This has included contrasting gender understandings that encompass concepts, linguistic terminology and priorities (Caretta 2015; Gaskell and Eichler 2001; Goddard et al). We have endeavoured to take an approach of internal inquisitiveness as a team, taking nothing for granted. To support effective communication as a multi-language team we have ensured budget for translation of research materials including reports, and optionality to complete surveys and interviews in language of preference as appropriate. Meetings have been recorded with transcript for ease of access, and we provided translation options for external stakeholders in online meetings.

4. Drawing on interdisciplinary research skills

Our international and disciplinary diversity as a research team has informed a diverse skill set that can simultaneously pose a strength and challenge. Collectively we brought to the research expertise across Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines, with their accompanying theoretical, empirical and methodological lenses on both teaching and research. This is a vital resource in an investigation of higher education teaching and learning contexts such as our own. However this also engenders different understandings, expertise and confidence around such key research dimensions as working with human subjects; designing data collection instruments; analysing and presenting findings. To support development of a research strategy that was unified without allowing some team understandings to dominate over others, we utilised an external research skills consultant at key points throughout the research process. The consultant led research sessions in which we worked together as a team under external facilitation to make key research design, analysis and presentation decisions collaboratively.

5. Remote collaboration - working together apart

Closeness of communication has been pivotal to supporting development of shared understandings across wide experiences and distances, without in-person contact. While we have worked consciously to build effective working relationships remotely, this has inevitably altered the research team experience compared to our experiences of working internationally in-person. The research design was developed in early summer 2019, as academics across the world learned to change the way we worked in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The research was hence designed to be carried out entirely remotely given that international travel was largely prohibited at the time and has remained so for much of the life of the research. Online communication opens research possibilities through collapsing boundaries of space and time. However this also creates its own challenges including in terms of working across time zones; unequal access to hardware, software and most pressingly, high speed internet connections (Brewer 2015); and loss of the opportunity to come to know each others' professional contexts at the more visceral level afforded by in-person international visits. The mass move to online working globally that was engendered by the pandemic also had a knock-on effect on expected levels of internet capacity for some team member contexts. To address issues of technological accessibility we ensured that meetings were recorded and follow-up email clarified key outcomes to ensure that team members experiencing connectivity issues were not excluded from project developments. We also applied successfully to reallocate budget to internet support costs given the unanticipated demands posed by the pandemic on this accessibility.

6. The COVID-19 Pandemic

The specter of the pandemic has been an ever present variable in this research. While the onset of the pandemic informed our development of a risk-averse remote research design as detailed above, this could not protect the research entirely from the impact of COVID-19. Research team members in different international contexts were impacted by care responsibilities for family members who fell ill during the pandemic, and for dependent children who had to be homeschooled. COVID-19 restrictions led to short notice moving of teaching online and in some cases rescheduling of term dates. These demands impacted

team members in terms of demands on research time as well as access to students and colleagues for research participation in our survey and interviews. In some cases partner universities did not permit the internal sharing of recruitment emails for research purposes, which delayed research progress. The most acute impact was felt though the disastrous effect of the pandemic in India, given that one of the project partners is a university on the outskirts of Delhi. The sheer human consequences of panic to access medical treatment and oxygen required research activity and communication to pause until appropriate, while the local partner negotiated an immediate context that included the experience of the death of students to COVID-19.

7. Equitable partnerships for collaborative international research

This research has been funded under the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), with collaboration and capacity-building between the UK and developing countries as central principles (GCRF 2021). We recognise international collaborative research as vital to providing the opportunity to move beyond hierarchical approaches to knowledge production whereby research on the Global South is undertaken by researchers from the Global North (Crewe and Axelby, 2013). While bringing together multiple researchers with distinctive and specialist perspectives to tackle research problems as in this research offers epistemological value, it also raises questions over how such multiple viewpoints can be integrated in practice (Mauthner and Doucet 2008). We recognise collaborative research such as ours aimed at building local capacity to be 'complex, contested, time-consuming' while also having great potential (Fimyar et al. 2017). Our commitment to addressing these challenges and limitations in equitable collaborative international working have been to remain alert to research dynamics (Bassett, 2012; Rhee, 2013, McGregor et al., 2014 Durdall and Powell 2021), and area which there has often been lacking from existing studies (Mauthner and Doucet, 2008).

There is a need to develop further understanding around experiences in power-sharing between feminist scholars seeking to challenge inequities, yet where inequities in the ability

to participate are present (Lacey and Underhill-Sem 2018, Scantlebury & LeVan, 2006). In other project publications (Hinton-Smith et al., 2022) we have sought to contribute our research experience to this understanding as part of our wider commitment to increasing awareness of intersectional gender equality dynamics in higher education.

Recommendations

1. **Raising awareness of gender equity and inclusion at an institutional level:**

Across country contexts, the need for a university-wide policy on gender inclusion was identified, as well as the provision of opportunities for both student and staff to engage in gender awareness training. This could incorporate, but is not specific to, training around human rights, challenging gender stereotypes and culturally specific assumptions and greater awareness of gender related challenges that students may experience in their homes that may have impact on their learning. Training for new faculty was identified as particularly important.

2. **Gender as integral:** Rather than approach gender in isolation or as an additional point of discussion, we suggest that a focus on gender be integral in the approach to teaching and curriculum design (see Figure 8 below). It is recommended that this needs to take place across all programs of study, thus ensuring that the inclusion of gender in teaching focus and approach does not remain an area taken up at the discretion of individuals but is regarded as an area valued by the institution at large.

3. **Social media and communication:** Institutions could make greater use of social media to demonstrate the different work happening by lectures of different genders and ethnic backgrounds, ensuring that the achievements of different students, teachers and alumni are being highlighted, with the potential of creating a more welcoming environment for people whose identities don't fit the institutional norm. This also has the potential to form stronger social networks for both students and staff. It was also suggested that, where appropriate, media platforms such as Ted Talks be used to provide an accessible means of understanding the importance of the inclusivity of gender within higher education teaching and learning.

4. **Greater staff/student collaboration:** There was an identified need for students and staff to be working more closely together to reach mutually beneficial aims and improve communication around what work has been and needs to be done within respective institutions. In countries whereby the universities have an active student

union, it was suggested that the union works more closely with university management.

- 5. An intersectional approach:** Research across country contexts highlighted the need to take into account the ways in which gender intersects with other features of identity to inform experience (see Figure 9 below). This is particularly important in the Indian context, where caste becomes a critical category that is constantly interacting with gender.
- 6. Emphasis on both curricula and pedagogy:** While participants highlighted the need for having theorists and thinkers from a diverse gender spectrum, participants also mentioned that the way in which those theories are taught in the class is equally if not more important. This could incorporate the use of more inclusive examples and demonstrating respect and regard for the different gendered identities of the student body.
- 7. Increasing recruitment of more female faculty members:** This was seen as important in providing more role models for female students in particular and in shifting established power dynamics where male staff remain in senior positions. Career development opportunities for women students and staff were identified as particularly important.
- 8. Challenging established theories:** It was suggested that staff are giving greater support around how to mainstream gender within their own curriculums and draw upon a greater range of texts and resources, particularly more contemporary publications, which represent more diverse identities.
- 9. Equalising Admissions Policies** - This includes targeted admissions policies and opportunities where necessary, including reservation of student places for female students as identified in India and Nigeria, to ensure access opportunities for women students and through this opportunities for access to employment and political participation.
- 10. Literacy campaigns:** In the context of Nigeria, efforts to eradicate illiteracy among young women in particular remains key to promoting greater equality.

Figure 8. Response to question: How should gender should be approached in teaching and learning?

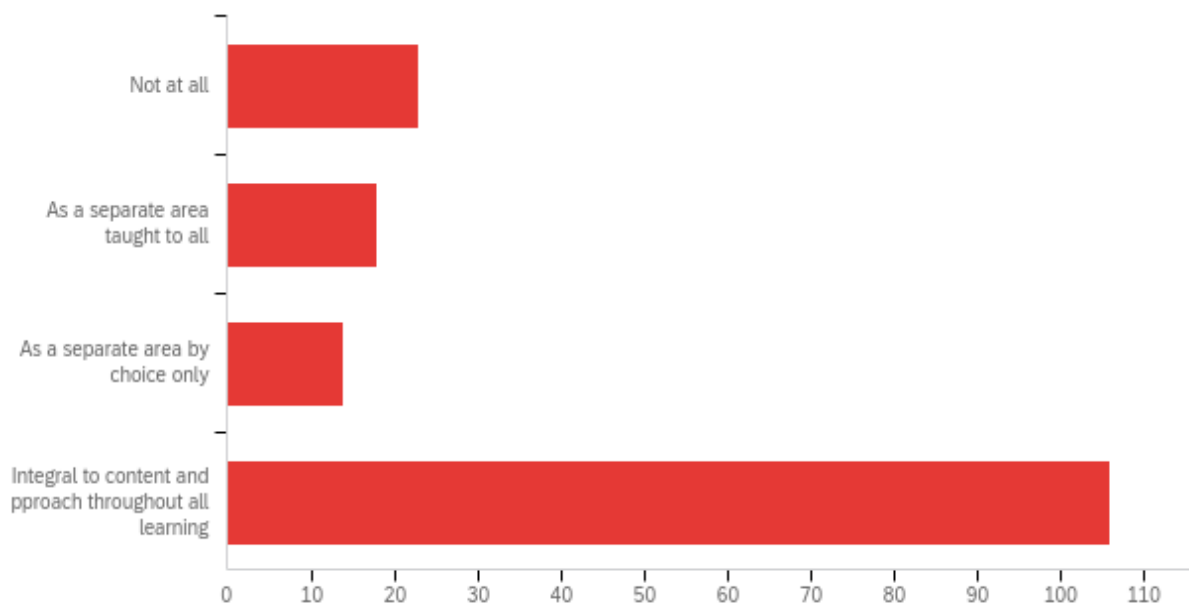
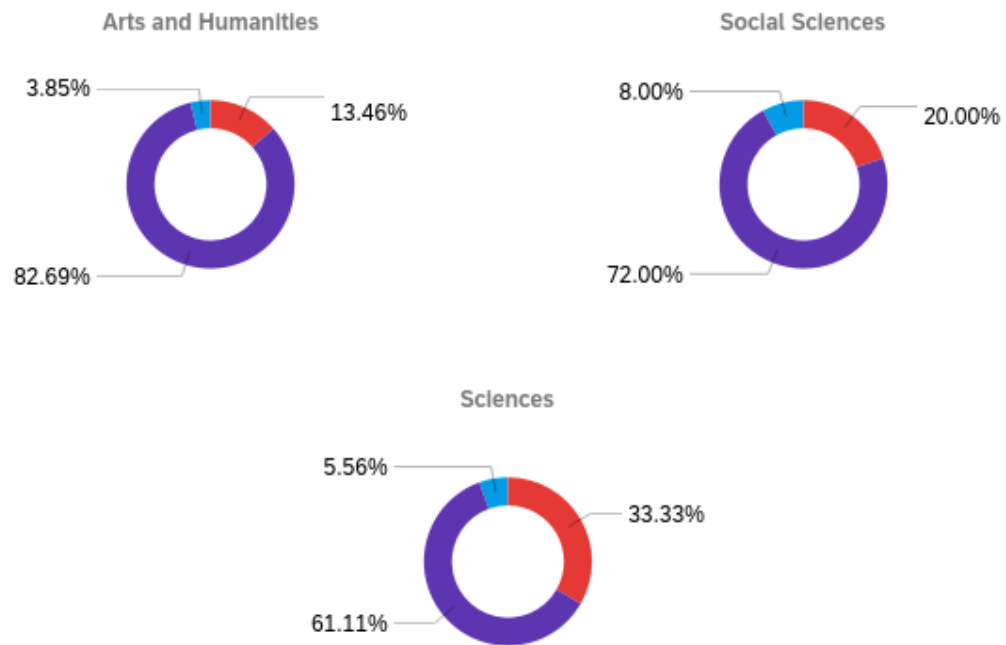


Figure 9. Response to question: Should gender be taught as a separate issue or in relation to other identity issues?



- We need to understand gender inclusion issues in higher education as a focus in its own right, separate to other issues.
- We need to understand gender inclusion issues in higher education as they relate to other aspects of identity such as age, disability, ethnicity and religion.
- Neither of these statements. Please explain more if you would like to:

Conclusions

The research summarised in this report and our series of accompanying individual country reports has given us as an international team valuable insights into an area of great commitment and consequence in our everyday professional lives as feminist academics – that of presences and exclusions of gender awareness and sensitivity in university curriculum content and pedagogical approaches. We represent diverse country contexts and academic disciplines, each of them made up of their own particular wider environments in terms of values, priorities, assumptions and understandings. In each of these contexts the challenges and opportunities for gender to be included and excluded in university teaching and learning are varied and specific, alongside other imperatives that are more widely shared. Yet across these diverse contexts we have been able to learn much that is valuably transferable beyond the immediate to effective knowledge-sharing for more equitable higher education learning experiences. These insights encompass aspects of the higher education classroom experience that range from whose thinking features in disciplinary canons of expertise; through to the teaching case studies, examples and illustrations selected by higher education teachers; and which students are shown time and respect in classrooms.

Why does all this matter? Developing understanding around how gender awareness and sensitivity are included and excluded within different higher education classroom contexts across countries and disciplines is vital to improving the learning context as a safe and productive learning space for all, including students and staff. This is key to ensuring that students feel able to experience belonging and respect for their own identity within their classroom, discipline and higher education institution. Experiencing belonging and value is key to student experience and outcomes through ensuring that diverse students are able to feel academically and socially embedded, persisting in higher education and meeting their academic potential. But increasing gender equality in university teaching is important beyond its own value within higher education classrooms. It is also vital to achieving multiple wider United Nations Social Development Goals (SDGs) including those focused on education (SDG4); gender equality (SDG5); decent work and economic growth (SDG8); reducing inequality (SDG10); good health and well-being (SDG3); fostering peace, justice and strong

institutions (SDG16). Our internally collaborative methodological approach to the research is also strongly linked to SDG17, fostering strong global partnerships to achieve the goals.

It has been key to our research insights and the ethos of collaboration and equity of voice that we have worked to foster, that we have been able to engage with a range of different voices that includes participants from different countries; university types (e.g. public; private); academic disciplines; genders; professional roles and tenure types; career stages; and wider identity characteristics that include nationality, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, care responsibilities, and more. It has been particularly important for us to actively include the voices of students who have been central our developing our insights, as participants in our surveys and interviews; and as speakers and delegates in our international online research conference. Students' voices have too often been marginalised from higher education decision making, particularly voices of students from the Global South majority world.

We have learned much in this research not only from our findings but also through our methodological approach. We set out with ambitions aligned with the principles of our funding stream and feminist commitments to conduct the research in a spirit of equity and collaborative partnership, as described in the Research design section above in this report. As outlined in the Challenges and limitations section here, our feminist perspectives demanded that we critically interrogate the extent to which we were successful in embodying these principles of equity and collaboration effectively, and where these goals were challenged. The intention of this self-reflection is to continue to improve ourselves as researchers and through this the potential of the research we undertake, as well as to contribute with value and integrity to the ongoing development of collaborative international research as a collective academic endeavour.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been an ever present companion of this research. Uninvited through it may have been, our developing understanding around the higher education learning classroom, features and challenges of this, cannot be extricated from the specific immediate wider context of continuing higher education learning amongst the conditions and constraints of a global phenomenon unique to what had ever occurred before. This impacted the nature of the learning encounters under investigation (often online); the demands on academics, students and universities; and a climate of precarity that affected perceptions of priorities within the university classroom.

Sharing these insights beyond our own immediate classrooms, departments, institutions and disciplines offers the potential for us to pool the resource of our collective insights beyond the boundaries of our immediate contexts for the benefit of all. It takes professional courage and critical reflection to ask colleagues (both researchers and participants) to shine light on exposing teaching practices within classrooms, departments and institutions, with a willingness to learn as much from what is not yet working as it should, as we have to learn from sharing what works well. The institutions and individuals participating in this research have all shown professional integrity in willingness to cast light on practices and learn from these, for the good of students. It has not been our intention to identify the teaching of any individual, department or institution as being wrong or in deficit in any way. Rather we hope that by learning together in authentic dialogue we can bring benefit to academic cultures and most importantly to the experiences and outcomes of students, in ways that exceed the sum of any of the individual parts involved in the research.

So what next? Our own work now continues with a next phase to develop a suite of toolkit resources and workshop training based on our learning, shareable with others open access in order to maximise knowledge-sharing opportunities. We hope that other universities will join us in this international collaborative learning project, utilising the workshop training and toolkit resources to create and carry out their own targeted auditing of gender inclusion and sensitivity within learning contexts, whether at the classroom, department or organisational level. Through this we hope that this will continue to be a living learning endeavour, with the

power to keep generating additional insight beyond that which we have been able to share as a research team of 10 individuals representing just five of the world's diverse country contexts, and only five of the huge diversity of universities that make up all of these countries' higher education sectors. We hope that colleagues will connect with us via our website to share their learning experiences and insights with us, and to explore ways that we might continue our learning together for the wider benefit of higher education students, staff and cultures.

Beyond this we hope that the questions we have begun to ask in this research and the insights generated by our participants may be seen to have wider relevance for other organisational contexts beyond higher education. This may include wider education contexts that might include primary, secondary, adult, community and informal learning contexts. Tools, questions and insights may further be of relevance to colleagues in research, policy and NGO contexts. We have already shared our insights with parliamentary colleagues wishing to advance gender equality in parliamentary research, policy and leadership development across the ASEAN region through our collaboration with [PCAsia](#). We have also shared our insights at a policy level including through targeted work with senior academic leaders from across Nigeria through the Nigerian [National Universities Commission](#). It is our intention that the questions, tools and insights developed by our tool should be adaptable to assist others working and learning in diverse settings to interrogate and improve their own gender practices. Please keep in touch with us and share your insights with our learning community: <https://mainstreamgenderhighereducation.wordpress.com/contact/>

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