



Gender Equality in a Higher Educational Institution: A Case in the Philippines

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Abstract

Amidst all the positive developments to promote gender equality in the Philippine educational system, this research hoped to examine how gender equality is promoted in a higher educational institution (HEI). It aimed to examine gender equality in the leadership and operations of a selected HEI in the Philippines. It utilized female-male ratios to analyze gender equality on areas of leadership, decision-making, gender composition, academic rank, promotions, and professional development opportunities. Although the data showed male-dominance in the area of top management, there are more females in terms of composition and membership. Management is not of the authoritarian method since the university religiously practices participatory approach in decision-making. Such arrangement allows female members to voice out their concerns and gain support of other members. Furthermore, the relatively big number of female teachers allows women to impart knowledge to students, which are not only academic topics but gender-related issues as well. This exchange of ideas allows gender issues to be discussed in a more open manner.

Keywords: Gender composition, gender equality, sex-disaggregated data..

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2012) defined “gender equality” as the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. It is, first and foremost, a human right. Empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty (United Nations Population Fund, 2013). Gender equality is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2012).

In the Philippines, important legislations have been enacted such as the Gender and Development Law, Anti-Sexual Harassment Law, Anti-Rape Law, Barangay Day Care Center Law, Women in Nation-Building Law (Anonuevo, 2000), among others. Such laws have paved the way toward the creation of vital structures like the Philippine Commission of Women and Women’s Desks in all branches of the Philippine National Police.

Presidential Decree No. 633 of January 7, 1975 created the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) which was later renamed as the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) through Republic Act No. 9710 of August 14, 2009. The PCW reviews, evaluates, and recommends measures to ensure the full integration of women for economic, social and cultural development at national, regional, and international levels and to ensure further equality between men and women (Philippine Commission on Women, 2013).

The World Bank identified the Philippines as a world leader in gender equality, particularly in the fields of legislation, management and government (World Bank, 2013). The country remains in the top 10 countries with the least gender gap, according to the 2011 Global Gender Gap rankings by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum (Inquirer, 2013).

In almost every aspect of the Philippine educational system, women and girls outnumber men and boys (United Nations, 2011). The 2008 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2010) showed that the basic literacy rate among females is 96.1% while 95.1% among males. Functional literacy among females in the same period was also higher at 88.7% as against 84.2% among males. At public elementary level during the school year

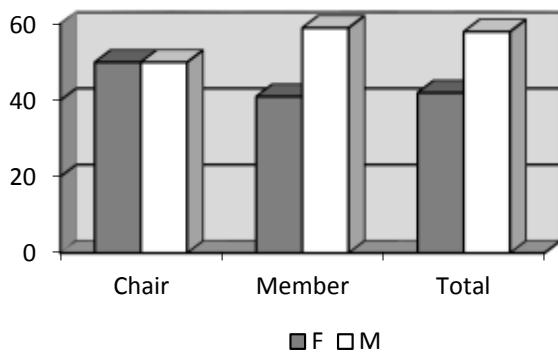


Figure 1: Percentage of females and males in policy-making bodies.

2010-2011, female Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) was computed at 91.07% while male NER was lower at 88.78%. Consequently, female participation rate in high school also exceeded that of males at 63.53% vs. 53.65%.

The completion rates for 2008-2009 indicated that more girls were able to complete the prescribed number of years in both elementary and secondary education. The completion rate of females at the elementary level was 77.89%, while male completion rate was 69.13%. The completion rate of female in the secondary level is higher at 79.94% compared with that of male at 70.44%, with gender disparity at 1.13 GPI or equivalent to 113 girls in every 100 boys. There was also a gender gap in achievement levels in favor of girls as shown by the performance of a cohort of children in the National Achievement Test (NAT). Test results, disaggregated by sex, show that the female advantage widened as the children moved up to higher grades in primary school.

For higher education enrollment during the school year 2005-2006, females accounted for more than half of the total 2,483,645 enrollees at 54.48% compared with males at 45.52%. In terms of school preference, 6 in every 10 women and 7 in every 10 men preferred to enroll in private universities and colleges than in public. Among the 263,634 graduates for school year 2005-2006, female graduates accounted for 56.61% while males accounted for 43.39% (Philippine Commission on Women, 2012).

But according to the United Nations Development Program in the Philippines (2012), these gains do not necessarily translate into positive measurable changes in the roles and status of women. Although women and men enjoy the same access to education, another study showed that a look at the status of women in academia finds that women are an under-represented group in tenured faculty positions and suffer from subtle gender discrimination in teaching, research, salary differentials, and promotion (Hansel, 1991).

The author is interested to find out starting with the leadership and operations of a higher educational institution in the Philippines.

Statement of the Problem

Amidst all the positive developments to promote gender equality in the Philippine educational system, this research hoped to examine how gender equality is promoted in a higher educational institution (HEI) which is a private organization ran by a congregation of priests. Top private colleges and universities in the country are managed by religious organizations.

Objectives

This study generally aimed to examine gender equality in the leadership and operations of a selected HEI in the Philippines. To attain this general objective, the specific objectives were as follows: (1) to generate and analyze sex-disaggregated data on the existing leadership structures of the university; (2) to collect and examine data on faculty and personnel gender composition, academic rank, promotions, and professional development among females and males. The study covered the period 2010-2011.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study utilized secondary data accumulated by pertinent units in the university and consolidated by the researcher. The data was analyzed using frequency distribution and percentage. Female-male ratios were used to analyze gender equality on areas of leadership, gender composition, academic rank, promotions, and professional development opportunities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership and Management

This section presents the sex-disaggregated composition of the highest policy-making bodies of the university in 2010-2011; heads, faculty and staff of academic departments and non-academic units; academic rank and faculty pursuing master's and doctor's degrees. There are five policy-making bodies in the institution – Board of Trustees (BOT), Council of Administrators (COA), Academic Council (AC), Research Council (RC) and Social Involvement Council (SIC). As shown in figure 1, the headship of these councils is shared equally by women and men but the membership is occupied mostly by males. The two highest policy-making bodies, BOT and COA, are both headed by males. The BOT is composed of two females only and 13 males, eight of whom are priests. The President is always a priest and therefore male. He likewise heads the COA which is the second highest decision-making body.

The university has two divisions – college and high school. For the college division, as shown in figure 2,

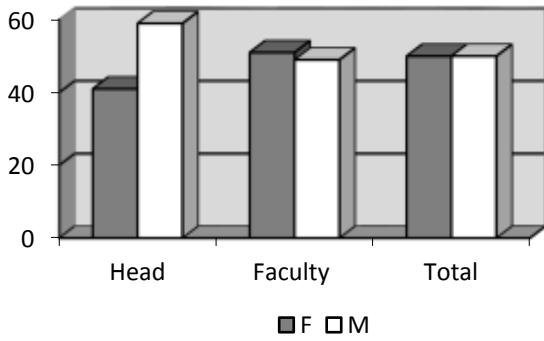


Figure 2: Percentage of females and males in college academic departments.

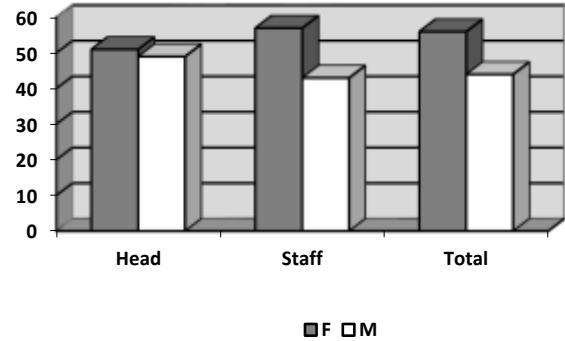


Figure 4: Percentage of females and males in non-academic units.

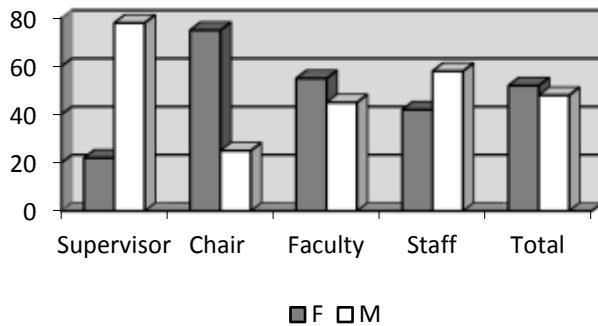


Figure 3: Percentage of females and males in the high school division.

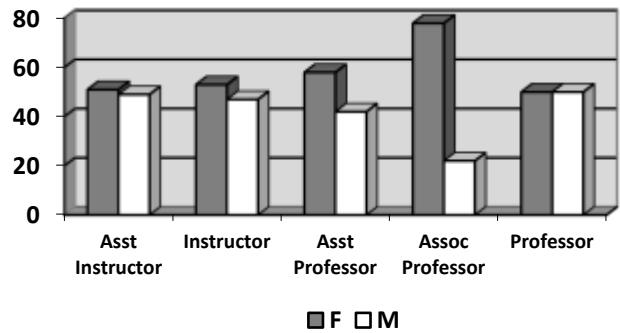


Figure 5: Percentage of females and males in each academic rank

academic departments are shared equally by men and women. Majority of college faculty in 2010-2011 are females but the academic leadership is dominated by males.

For the high school division, as shown in figure 3, there were more female department chairpersons than male. Similarly, there were more female teachers. However, the top supervisory positions were occupied mostly by males – the principal and assistant principal were men. In the same way, the non-teaching staff members were mostly males.

All in all, there is 53% female composition of non-academic offices. Most units with 100% women actually represent one staff who is normally a secretary or clerk. As shown in figure 4, women are fairly represented in the non-academic units as more of them hold supervisory and staff positions. Yet again, these offices are mainly engaged in support roles. The primary function of the university is to impart knowledge and information.

Academic Rank and Promotions

Figure 5 shows the different ranks of full-time and part-time faculty members in the college division, arranged

from lowest to highest. Among the full-time teachers, 55% is female while among the part-timers, 50%. The high percentage of women is found under Assistant Professor 4 and Associate Professor 1. But there are no women under Associate Professor 3 and Associate Professor 4.

Professional Development and Promotions

The university provides scholarships for deserving faculty members who want to pursue graduate and post-graduate studies. Those who pursue PhD can receive dissertation writing grant while those who take MA can receive thesis writing grant.

Aside from the earlier contention that women are expected to keep the house and assume reproductive roles, which are day-to-day tasks, she is likewise expected to support the husband in earning income. To avail of deloading means the teacher can focus on one's studies and research and therefore complete the course faster. But such arrangement does not allow a teacher to handle additional units which is equivalent to lower take-home pay. The data in figures 6 and 7 shows that female

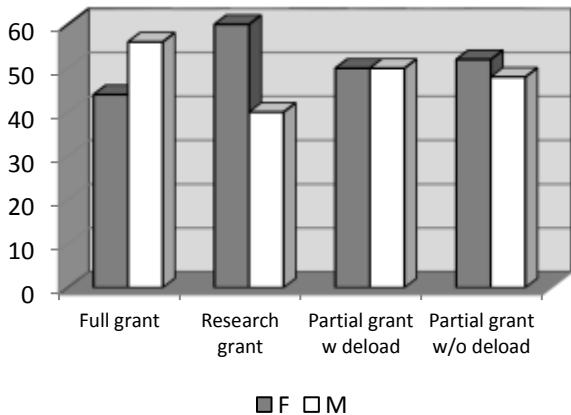


Figure 6: Percentage of females and males taking master's degree

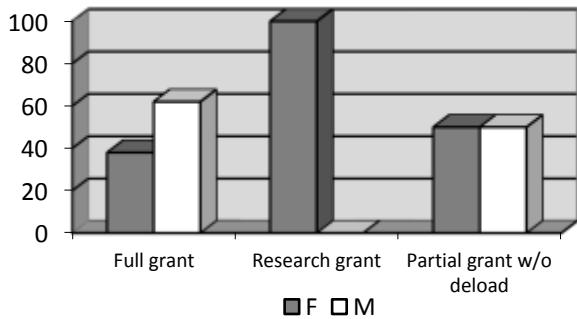


Figure 7: Percentage of females and males taking doctor's degree

faculty, for some reasons, is not prepared to receive lesser salaries. So instead of focusing on her own work goals such as pursuing higher degrees at the shortest possible time, she prefers to help her husband augment household income.

Leadership and Management

In the context of this inquiry, leadership pertains to innovations and vision-setting while management refers to the implementation of the vision and supervision of day-to-day operations. Majority of those people who exercise both leadership and management in the institution are males. As observed from the data collected, the top brass of university management is composed of majority males.

Females on the other hand belong to the minority of the Board of Trustees. Even if the major councils of the university are headed by females, one cannot deny that the offices that they are holding and the major decisions they make are still subject to the approval of the board

and the university president. Major councils can also define the policies of the university, but given their position in the employment hierarchy, females are still subordinate to a male-dominated system.

The employment system is divided into teaching responsibilities and administrative and/or clerical ones. On the first sub-division, although the population of the college faculty is composed of more females than males, their respective departments are headed by males. This means that the command responsibility is left on the hands of the male department chairpersons. Department chairs are tasked to create policies for their own unit, approve or suggest possible activities and tasks for the teachers and implement them so the female teachers are subordinate to their male supervisors. On the other hand, the administrative and/or clerical tasks are dominated by females but most of their tasks are of clerical ones, meaning more of filing, organizing and documentation. Even if this is the case, they are more of serving the secondary purpose since the university prioritizes teaching rather than office work. In the high school department, there are more females in the faculty sector and most of the department chairs are also females but the policy-making positions, that of the principal, assistant principal and other administration posts are held by males. The same conclusion could also be made with that of the college division.

Faculty and Personnel Gender Composition

As stated in the previous paragraph, female teachers, though they dominate the faculty sector, are still supervised mostly by males. Those units that are headed by females are tasked to handle activities which can be associated to motherhood roles such as that of the CLC which is charged to baby-sit toddlers and preschoolers, and CRC which ascertains that students learn how to read and complete the reading booklets. Although these departments also impart knowledge on the students, they are expected to exert nurturing and extra special care for their students. These are exactly what are expected of mothers. The patience and understanding of a female teacher are perfect for such role. Those departments headed by males cater to technical courses like computer science and engineering, and of normative courses such as theology and philosophy.

Offices which are dominated by females have assigned them mostly to clerical roles rather than supervisory ones. Although there are some units which are hundred-percent female-dominated, such percentage, when converted to actual numbers, merely represent one female staff who has likewise ended up as a clerk.

There are a few exceptions though, as there are offices supervised by females who do not only take charge of clerical or support roles, but the women also supervise the whole operations of their respective

offices.

Employment and Promotions

On the category pertaining to employment and promotions, although this is already related to the population data, one can focus on the ranks of the female faculty members and the data showed that females are greatly benefited in their employment. Though small in number, women can still afford to reach the highest possible rank even for part-time faculty. One could state that female teachers are equipped with the necessary skills for them to be promoted even if their departments or the administration is handled mostly by males.

Professional Development

The last category pertained to professional development opportunities. There were more female faculty who avail of the benefits like financial aid for further studies. One observation though was that female teachers are not prepared to sacrifice their salaries even if they were already receiving additional benefits in order to fully focus on their studies like pursuing doctoral degree with partial deloading.

CONCLUSION

Even if some councils of the university are headed by females, one cannot deny that the offices that they are holding and the major decisions they make are still subject to the approval of the board and the university president, who will always be a male priest. Major councils can also define the policies of the university, but given their position in the employment hierarchy, females are still subordinate to a male-dominated system.

Those units that are headed by females are tasked to handle activities which can be associated to motherhood roles such as that of the CLC which is charged to babysit toddlers and pre-schoolers, and CRC which ascertains that students learn how to read and complete the reading booklets. Although these departments also impart knowledge on the students, they are expected to exert nurturing and extra special care for their students. These are exactly what are expected of mothers. The patience and understanding of a female teacher are perfect for such role. Those departments headed by males cater to technical courses like computer science and engineering, and of normative courses such as theology and philosophy.

The assignment of clerical work, teaching, reading, comprehension and toddler education to women is anchored on the assumption that females have maternal instinct. Mothers are assumed to be good in home management, teaching and taking care of their children.

The posts earlier mentioned often hire women since there is already an impression that the skills needed for said jobs are already inherent in females.

Although the data showed male-dominance in the area of top management, there are more females in terms of composition and membership. Even if decision-making is left largely in the hands of male executives, the decisions laid out to them come from the suggestions and initial decisions of the members. Management is not of the authoritarian method since the university religiously practices participatory approach in decision-making. Such arrangement allows female members to voice out their concerns and gain support of other members.

Furthermore, the relatively big number of female teachers allows women to impart knowledge to students, which are not only academic topics but gender-related issues as well. This exchange of ideas allows gender issues to be discussed in a more open manner. The results are manifested much in the university as the males and females have relatively equal access to promotions and professional development opportunities.

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