

The EU publishes *SHE Figures*, which monitor the gender dimension in research and innovation across the European Union. In 2002, the share of tertiary graduates was similar for both sexes, however the percentage of female graduates has since grown by almost twice the rate. In 2016, the gender gap in the European Union, meaning the proportion of women aged 30–34 that had attained tertiary education, exceeded men by 9.5 percent, with women outnumbering men in almost all member states.

Yet, women earn on average 16 percent less than men. Only 20 percent of heads of European higher education institutions are women. In 2013, women were 21 percent of top-level researchers, having made very limited progress since 2010. Among scientific and administrative board leaders, women constitute only 22 percent, and 28 percent of board members. The greatest variability is at professorial level, with most EU countries having institutions with no female full professors.

Bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, have also been issues on Irish campuses.

The gender pay gap recently made headlines in the United Kingdom when 2018 figures were published. This refers to the difference between the average earnings of men and women, expressed relative to men's earnings. While it may not tell us anything we did not already know—that men dominate top earning positions—the results are striking. The median pay gap is 9.8 percent nationally, but 18.4 percent among universities. Women in two universities are paid 37.7 percent less than men. As the BBC reported, of the prestigious Russell Group, Durham University fares worst with a 29.3 percent gap.

In Ireland, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) published the *National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* (2016), with wide-ranging recommendations. There has never been a female president since the first university was established ca. 426 years ago, and there are currently only two female presidents in the institute of technology sector. The figures are particularly acute by discipline, with the greatest discrepancy in science, technology, engineering, maths, and medicine (STEMM). Professorial appointments have provoked great outcry, with a landmark award being given to a woman at NUIG by the Equality Tribunal in 2009, on the grounds of gender discrimination.

Yet, Ireland is also an example of what can happen when policy and funding drive behavior. The Athena SWAN

Charter was established in the United Kingdom in 2005 to encourage and recognize commitment to advancing the careers of women in STEMM. It has since been expanded to all disciplines and adopted in Ireland. There are three award levels, bronze being “entry level,” certifying institutions’ commitment to the 10 key principles, and requiring a critical self-analysis and action plan. Most significantly, the three Irish research funding councils have made it a requirement that an HEI achieves the bronze by 2019, and a silver by 2023, to be eligible for research funding.

As a result, all HEIs are actively engaged in appointing a vice-president for equality, diversity, and inclusion, and busy making appointments at the senior level. Training is being introduced to address unconscious bias, and is required for senior management. But progress is very slow. It could take decades to reach the recommended gender balance of 40 percent. Hence, there is talk of quotas. The take-away is that nothing moves institutions faster than money. I am getting over my frustration with women being appointed simply to meet new regulations—but have we not had that experience with men for decades. ■

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Sexual Violence in Ethiopian Higher Education

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Higher education in Africa is in the grip of sexual violence. For example, one of the continent's leading institutions, Makerere University in Uganda, recently made international headlines for the appalling revelations of a two month-long investigation that shook the whole institution. A closer look at the situation in Ethiopia can help understand the nature and extent of the problem.

AN INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLE

Hanna Tefera had been the director of the University Gender Affairs Directorate at Adama Science and Technology University since November 2013. On January 18, 2018, she received a letter of dismissal from her position for unstated reasons. Tefera said her removal was sudden and she did not know anything as to why. Meanwhile, *Addis Standard* reported that Tefera's removal was related to a case she was

investigating. Last December, she wrote a letter to the president of the university reporting a sexual assault committed against a female student and demanding an immediate inquiry into the matter. The letter stated that the student had been attacked by an unidentified armed man who broke into her dormitory. Referencing relevant provisions of the constitution and the regulations of the university, Tefera condemned the crime. She underlined that, if a dormitory search was necessary, it would have been appropriate to send in female soldiers. (Following political instability in the past couple of years, the military has been deployed at universities to control potential protests and disruptions.) In her letter, Tefera further expressed her concern about multiple cases of sexual harassment reported to her office, and demanded that the university take serious measures.

It is reported that Tefera was fired following a direct order from a board member of the university, who was also a senior officer in the National Defense Forces. This case symbolizes the overall situation and the indifference of the university leadership. In such circumstances, how can a university be a safe learning environment for female students? What can student services professionals do to mitigate the situation?

MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

Owing to deep-rooted, patriarchal traditions in Ethiopia, society is plagued by gender bias, inequality, and sexual violence. Higher education is no exception. A recent study at Wolaita Sodo University, for instance, reported that out of 462 female students in the study, 36.1 percent said they had experienced sexual violence since they joined the university, while the figure was 45.4 percent for their experience over their whole lifetime. Another study at Madawalabu University found that out of 411 female students in its sample, 41.1 percent had experienced sexual violence over their lifetime and 25.4 percent had experienced it in the previous 12 months. Exploring why female students drop out, a study at Jimma University found that 82.4 percent of the respondents (out of 108 students who had dropped out) said it was related to sexual harassment; 57.4 percent said pregnancy was among the reasons for dropping out. Studies at other universities have also reported similar, prevalent sexual violence. Sexual violence is reported to have been committed by fellow students, faculty, and university employees, as well as other people unrelated to the universities. Some students come to the university with previous experience of sexual violence. Combined with insufficient counseling and support services, this makes it very difficult for them to overcome their trauma and feel comfortable in the university environment.

Studies on this issue agree that available support for female students is very limited. While cultural norms and

taboos inhibit students from coming forward to seek help, in cases when they actually do, support services are often ill prepared and understaffed. The psychological aspect of the learning environment is largely underemphasized.

THE BIGGER ISSUE: GENDER BIAS

Over the past decade, progress has been made in narrowing the gender gap both in student enrollment (from 24.4 percent of undergraduate student population in 2005 to 32 percent in 2015) and in faculty composition (from 10.3 percent in 2005 to 12 percent in 2015). Nonetheless, women continue to experience high levels of differential treatment. Despite benefits at the entry level, gender bias and sexual

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violence continue to damage the experience of female students and deter them from succeeding. Female students are also largely concentrated in the fields of social sciences and humanities. It has even been reported that institutions actively discourage female students from choosing fields in the hard sciences, as a strategy to reduce the dropout rate of female students—ironically, this is considered an “affirmative action” measure.

Meanwhile, a recent study revealed that women are 50 percent less likely to hold the rank of lecturer and 72 percent less likely to hold the rank of assistant professor or above. This staggering difference is explained by a number of factors that deter women from progressing in their careers, despite overall statistical improvements.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

While a top-down approach to behavioral change is arguably slow and less effective, a peer-based approach seems a viable alternative, though by no means the only one. Attitudinal change in the university community is crucial to prevent sexual violence from happening and give victims the confidence to speak out and seek help. Decades of social/psychological research have shown that bystanders are more likely to intervene when they have a clear understanding of the violence and the skills needed to engage in prosocial behavior without compromising their own safety. There have been cases showing that empowering students and student leaders as bystanders is an effective way to fight sexual violence on campus.

This requires engagement in university-wide and continuous awareness programs. In doing so, it is important to consider a few points. First, the program should reach the entire university community. Engaging with those who are thought to have less awareness or those who are naturally drawn to the issue is not enough. Second, considering that certain aspects of gender bias and sexual violence are so deeply rooted in social norms, it is important to start with a clarification of the meaning of sexual violence and its manifestations. Third, programs should include different mechanisms of engagement and incentives to increase participation and sustainability.

Cognizant of resource constraints and limited qualified personnel, a possible remedy is the use of volunteer training of trainers, with standardized materials and quality control, that multiplies through a pyramid scheme to reach every part of the university over a certain period. Once that is achieved, offering mandatory training to all new students and employees can be a possible further step in order to ensure sustainability.

This peer-based approach is not a substitute for other strategies, nor is it sufficient on its own. It has to be used as an integrated component of broad-based approaches, both top-down and bottom-up. It is worth noting that the explicit commitment of university and system-level leadership is a crucial force for success. Promoting a safe and supportive working environment for women in senior management and among faculty and staff, as well as strengthening student services with qualified staff and sufficient resources, are indispensable measures to be taken by institutions and by the government. However, the perceivable absence of genuine commitment from the top should not deter student services and gender affairs offices from striving for change within current constraints. ■

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Brexit and Universities: Toward a Reconfiguration of the European Higher Education Sector?

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In a 2016 referendum, 51.9 percent of registered voters were in favor of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. The “Brexit” process—the practicalities of which are still largely unknown—was officially triggered in May 2017. Brexit may have serious implications for higher education in the United Kingdom and beyond.

At present, the United Kingdom is the second largest recipient of competitive research funding from the European Union after Germany. UK researchers are more likely to be chosen as leaders in collaborative funding bids, and the United Kingdom is a favorite destination of individual recipients of research fellowships. Six percent of students and a staggering 17 percent of staff at UK universities are from other EU countries. While the prestige of UK higher education institutions plays a part in this success, the United Kingdom benefits from its position as a “gateway” to Europe, attracting students and researchers for this reason also.

In addition, nearly half of the academic papers produced by the United Kingdom are written in collaboration with at least one international partner—and among the top 20 countries UK academics cooperate the most with, 13 are in the European Union. A significant proportion of these jointly authored papers arise from research collaborations funded by the European Union. Finally, several key pan-European research facilities such as the High Power Laser Energy Research Facility are based in the United Kingdom. Free movement, which is guaranteed under the rules of EU membership at present, is essential for these research facilities to be used to their full potential.

A “hard Brexit” could be devastating for the UK higher education sector. Yet, it is clear that the UK higher education system will not be the only one affected in the event of a “hard Brexit” where, in the worst-case scenario, EU students would be charged full international fees to study in the United Kingdom, freedom of movement for researchers would be restricted, and the United Kingdom would no longer be able to participate in collaborative bids for funding.