

# Gender Mainstreaming in Public Universities in Mexico

Carlos David Carrillo Trujillo, Rebelín Echeverría Echeverría, Nancy Evia Alamilla, Rocío Quintal López

**Abstract**—Gender as a social construct is a term now widely studied. Within the social sciences it has become very important. In this sense, psychology tries to make some contributions from your area. The intention is to promote equal opportunities for men and women. Social, employment and educational inequities perpetuate sexism, violence and other important social problems in Mexico. The gender perspective is conceptualized as a tool to promote laws, policies, plans, programs and procedures where women are made visible and empowered. The aim of this is the pursuit of equality. Thus, gender mainstreaming is one of the main challenges of education in Mexico. Only a few universities have programs, research or subjects related to the topic. Human resources, and time allocated to teachers are identified as obstacles to the institutionalization of gender. The objective was to make a diagnosis on course offerings and policies on gender. A documentary study and interviews with managers of at least 20 higher education institutions (IES's) were performed. The results indicate the need for greater gender courses, research projects and intervention. The need to promote policies that seek equal opportunities between men and women is also noted.

**Keywords**—Gender mainstreaming, institutionalization, universities.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THERE currently within the social sciences interest in gender. Some social problems such as sexism, gender violence and health problems are related to the lack of equality between men and women.

Among the core objectives for the current international agenda is the correction of historical inequalities upon race, ethnicity and gender. Equality, certainly a matter of social justice, is also a must for every society's economic and cultural development [1].

Mainstreaming a gender perspective becomes a necessity and a responsibility. To achieve the mainstreaming of a gender perspective, in Mexico Secretary Public Education (SEP) [2] proposes:

1. changes in the concept of gender equality,
2. gender mainstreaming in the political agenda,
3. participation of women in positions where decisions are made,
4. priority policies relating to gender equality and
5. make changes in the institutional and organizational policy institutions.

C. C. is with the Autonomous University of Yucatan, Mérida Yucatán, Mexico (phone: +52 9991-526877; e-mail: carrillo.trujillo@gmail.com).

R.E., N.E., and R.Q. are with the Autonomous University of Yucatan, Mérida Yucatán, Mexico (e-mail: rechever@correo.uady.mx, nancy.eviagmail.com, rocioq14@hotmail.com).

Within this frame, education comes forward as a key element for reducing and even banishing these gaps; particularly those between men and women.

In Latin America, and particularly in Mexico, there is a big debate regarding the incorporation of Gender Perspective (GP) in all institutions of professional studies. Government, at all of its levels, has made significant efforts to promote a culture of gender equality.

In Mexico, the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) and the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES) have made various attempts for the formal incorporation of GP in all IES's. Its main objective is to strength women's participation and to promote their access to education through five action axes:

1. Sensitization
2. Design of curriculum
3. Research and cultural diffusion,
4. Institutional culture and
5. Inter-institutional coordination.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The first thing done was to know the number of public and private universities in the three states from Mexico: Yucatán, Campeche and Quintana Roo. Subsequently, the directors of the various higher education institutions involved were interviewed. A next step was to conduct a literature review on the number of professions and specialties of each institution. Finally, the websites of each of the universities were reviewed. Various checklists were used as instruments. The purpose of the checklists was whether universities have workshops, courses, action or proceeding related to gender or gender mainstreaming.

## III. RESULTS

In the Peninsula of Yucatan there is at least 60 IES's. Therefore, the objective of this first study was to achieve an accurate and updated diagnose on public IES's, specifically in public universities, regarding: 1) career opportunities currently offered, 2) inner situation on GP politics, and 3) current curricular options (classes, training, actions) covering PDG topics.

Only 21 (33.88%) out of the 62 IES's in the peninsula are public; including autonomous universities and technological institutes. The remaining 41 (66.12%) comprise Centers for Higher Education/Studies and private Universities (Table I).

TABLE I  
 IES'S DISTRIBUTION IN THE PENINSULA OF YUCATAN

State	Public	Private	Total
Yucatán	16.13% (10)	32.25% (20)	48.38% (30)
Campeche	6.45% (4)	12.90% (8)	19.35% (12)
Quintana Roo	11.30% (7)	20.97% (13)	32.27% (20)

It can be observed that the private schools outnumbered the public ones; in Yucatan private education stands for almost two thirds of the offer, whereas in Campeche and Quintana Roo it covers approximately half of the available education options. Private IES's, unlike public IES's, do not qualify to request sponsorships for the development and implementation of projects to promote GP, provided by the Comprehensive Institutional Strengthening Program (PIFI). Therefore, private IES's, with no access to PIFI resources and having to rely on their own, would be less likely to formally incorporate GP programs.

For 2012-2013 period, PIFI had a budget of 15.5 million MXN (approximately 1 million USD) destined to GP projects in public IES's, distributed according to the institution's

dimension and the results of an evaluation performed by a committee in charge. The top budget provided to a large institution (with at least 30 thousand registered students) was of 1 million MXN; that is almost 70 thousand USD. For the smallest institutions (with no more than 3 thousand registered students) the top budget was of 200 thousand MXN; that is less than 14 thousand USD [2]. The following period, 2014-2015, PIFI's budget was of 25 million MXN. Regarding the available career options, we found at least 669 programs of bachelor's or engineer's degree in the Peninsula. Social-Humanities and Management related careers stand for most of the IES's offer; whereas Chemistry and Biological Sciences related careers show the smallest number. Thus, including academic subjects and/or other actions regarding PDG would be quite suitable for careers on the Social-Humanities area. As [3] mentioned, perhaps the most evident contribution to gender studies is the rejection to the idea of human as masculine, that for two thousand years has been the base of paradigms and has infiltrated the substantive theories of our disciplines as well as the daily fields.

TABLE II  
 DISTRIBUTION OF IES'S CAREER OPTIONS IN THE PENINSULA OF YUCATAN

	Yucatan	Campeche	Quintana Roo	Total
Biology	12.05% (40)	12.06% (17)	7.15% (14)	10.61% (71)
Physics/Mathematics	25.60% (85)	22.69% (32)	19.39% (38)	23.17% (155)
Chemistry	2.71% (9)	2.13% (3)	.51% (1)	1.94% (13)
Management	27.41% (91)	29.79% (42)	36.73% (72)	30.64% (205)
Social / Humanities	32.23% (107)	33.33% (47)	36.22% (71)	33.64% (225)
	100% (332)	100% (141)	100% (196)	100% (669)

TABLE III  
 DISTRIBUTION OF AREAS OF STUDY

	Yucatán	Campeche	Quintana Roo	Total
Biological Sciences	12.05% (40)	12.06% (17)	7.15% (14)	10.61% (71)
Physical Sciences	25.60% (85)	22.69% (32)	19.39% (38)	23.17% (155)
Chemistry	2.71% (9)	2.13% (3)	.51% (1)	1.94% (13)
Administration	27.41% (91)	29.79% (42)	36.73% (72)	30.64% (205)
Social Sciences	32.23% (107)	33.33% (47)	36.22% (71)	33.64% (225)
	100% (332)	100% (141)	100% (196)	100% (669)

According to [1], the next step was finding out whether the IES's were carrying any action regarding GP. An action could be a speech, an academic event, a conference or a workshop related to the topic GP, masculinities, sexual diversity, etc.) and offered to the academic staff and/or students, through the 2013-2014 school term. It could be observed that, as expected, in Campeche and Quintana Roo more actions take place in the public IES's. Though, in Yucatan it is different; 60% of public IES's did not perform any action related to GP. In Campeche, private IES's did not perform any action, whereas in Quintana Roo almost half of them did. Only one institution reported a workshop on masculinities 7 (Table III).

Regarding the subjects offered by the IES's in any available career program it was found that in all three locations less than 30% of the public IES's have any related gender related subject. Private IES's are less homogenous; for instance in Yucatan and in Campeche, about 50% and 25% of them offer

at least one subject, respectively, whereas in Quintana Roo 15% do not offer any subject at all.

Regarding the specific subjects, none of them focused in masculinities (Table IV), although in the last decade the study of "the masculinity(ies)" has become a strategic axis in modern epistemology and social theory [4]. Following the National Program for equal opportunities and no discrimination against women (PROIGUALDAD 2013-2018) actions must aim at the modernization of plans, academic programs and didactic resources, eliminating stereotypes, with an inclusive language and no discrimination by gender. It is necessary the promotion of affirmative and educative actions in favor of women, in order to reduce and delete all gaps of inequality, the training of the academic staff on women's rights, the development of a culture of equality and the reduction of violence in the school environment, among others.

According to [1], the inclusion of gender studies in the academic programs favors the process of institutionalization of PG in the IES through two complementary objectives: 1) youth's formation by including new theoretical and methodological elements for understanding their social reality and 2) debating in class gender topics so students learn to deconstruct the diverse forms of social discrimination and incorporate values of equality and respect to differences.

TABLE IV  
 DISTRIBUTION OF GP SUBJECTS IN THE SCHOOL TERM 2013-2014 IN IES'S OF THE PENINSULA OF YUCATAN

State	Public		Private	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yucatan	20% (2)	80% (8)	55% (11)	45% (9)
Campeche	25% (1)	75% (3)	25% (2)	75% (6)
Quintana Roo	28.57% (2)	71.43% (5)	84.61% (11)	15.39% (2)

Another issue to explore is whether there are studies on gender or related topics (GP, masculinities, sexual diversity, etc.) in the IES's of the Peninsula. Results show that at least in 80% of private IES's no research on the topic has been done. In Campeche, no private institution has ever performed a related research. Public institutions results are diverse; Quintana Roo leads with about 70% of its public IES's, followed by Campeche with 50%, and at last Yucatan with only 10% (Table V).

TABLE V  
 DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH ON GENDER, MASCULINITIES OR OTHER RELATED TOPICS PERFORMED BY IES'S IN THE PENINSULA OF YUCATAN

State	Public		Private	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yucatan	10% (1)	90% (9)	15% (3)	85% (17)
Campeche	50% (2)	50% (2)	0% (0)	100% (8)
Quintana Roo	71.43% (5)	28.57% (2)	23.08% (3)	79.92% (10)

TABLE VI  
 DISTRIBUTION OF PERFORMANCE OF PROJECTS/PROGRAMS ON GENDER, MASCULINITIES, PDG OR RELATED TOPICS BY THE IES'S IN THE PENINSULA OF YUCATAN

State	Public		Private	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yucatan	70% (7)	30% (3)	10% (2)	90% (18)
Campeche	100% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (8)
Quintana Roo	85.71% (6)	14.29% (1)	15.39% (2)	84.61% (11)

Finally, it was questioned whether the IES's have any project or program on PDG, gender, masculinities or related topics. From 70% (Yucatán) to 100% (Campeche) of public IES's reported to have a program. Yet, private IES's show a different pattern with only 10% (Yucatan), 15% (Quintana Roo) and even 0% (Campeche), reporting to have a project or program (Table VI). According to [1], development of centers and programs on gender and women's studies has allowed institutions to acknowledge the importance of analyzing the relations between women and men. Pursuing this task is one of the strategies most widely used by universities in Mexico; worth to be mentioned the University Gender Studies Program (PUEG) of the Autonomus University of Mexico, whose

effects are evident in the process of academic formation, research and design of public policies and programs [5], and important theoretical contributions [1].

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Feminism has significantly gained strength and contributed to current trends of ideas, becoming a major influence in the world and questioning structures of oppression [6]. Nevertheless, feminism has always been an uncomfortable approach for certain social sectors (mostly those in power) and this has negatively impacted its image, to the point of becoming stigmatized and even misunderstood as advocate of what it is in fact fighting against. That is to say, some might wrongly think that feminism equals *hembrism* which believes females to be superior to men. These misunderstandings make some social sectors to unwelcome and to underrate topics on gender, GP, masculinities, and others. Moreover, some institutions are highly involved with institutions characterized by imposing limitations to openly discuss topics on gender, sexual diversity, masculinities, gender violence, etc., for instance in clerical environments.

Gender spaces, provided by universities, have become the most important source of critical knowledge about different social manifestations of gender inequality. Nevertheless, we must point out that gaining these spaces has been no easy task and faced multiple obstacles, making clear there still reluctance to incorporate this scientific perspective to analyze social problems.

Even though, the National Development Plan (2013-2018) establishes GP as a transverse axis, actions and speeches in universities must are not enough; a true critical and reflexive analysis on the daily social reality of women-men relations is necessary. Certainly, provision of PIFI funds to public universities for projects on gender equality is promising; yet, it must assessed the effect of those projects on incorporating a perspective of equality, respect and social justice in the universities' students, academics and staff. Moreover, means to incorporate this perspective in private universities is an issue to be resolved.

In Mexico there is an important need for educational institutions to perform many more actions on gender. Actions from different areas and at different levels: academic, administrative and organizational. No social change is possible without institutions do not change.

Fortunately, not everything is negative. In Mexico, it can be observed that even though some institutions are doing research on gender issues, the infrastructure and budget they rely on is quite limited in comparison to other areas of research, and also their number of places academics and status is low [7]. Yet, this panorama is even more limited in the private sector. Most private IES's do not have GP as a priority; some may offer a subject or have committed individuals, but it stays as a disarticulated and isolated effort, without a real and integrated institutional change.

As mentioned by [8], from university environments, gender transversality is a complicated task, lack of references and models, poor or inexistent gender awareness, organizational

and material difficulties, limited information about how it has been introduced in higher education programs; all of this, make understandable why some IES's have not worked on it yet. Furthermore, young people are not likely to recognize gender discrimination in their own lives [9], there is a certain rejection towards the feminist movement [10] and private IES's are staying behind in the commitment to introduce a GP. Thus, gender studies end up as an isolated practice continuously being questioned on their adequacy and efficacy [8].

GP must be conceptualized by educational institutions as a tool. The goal should be to promote actions among students, faculty and staff. Actions should have impact on academic aspects. Favoring plans and programs in the curricula. But also due to influence the rules and procedures among workers. The quest for equality between men and women is something that should be build by all.

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