

Evaluating Women Emancipation and Empowerment in the Academic Community: The University of Babylon as a Case Study

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Abstract

Gender equality is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the fifth goal aims to achieve gender equality worldwide by 2030. One of the dimensions of gender equality is women emancipation and empowerment in the workplace. This article presents a qualitative, cross-sectional case study for the University of Babylon, whereby the levels of women empowerment in academic community are evaluated. There are six main factors taken into consideration in the academic workplace, including gender equality in university policies, scientific promotions and occupations, meetings, training courses, language use, services, rewards and punishments, and assault reporting channels. Data was obtained from reports and semi-structured interviews, as well as a series of focus group discussions. The findings showed that, despite the remarkable development in equal opportunities, there is still a gap in enabling women to participate on the same footing as men. Limitations to gender equality policy implementation among elites in higher education are individual, social-cultural and economic. Higher education is characterised by stereotypes and retrogressive cultural beliefs which are subtly reproduced throughout the education system; therefore, the situation has to be improved with concerted efforts by the various stakeholders. Gender disaggregated data should be used in Higher Education to assess women empowerment as well as tracking both quantitative and qualitative women empowerment outcomes in higher education.

Keywords: Women empowerment, gender equality, academic community, university, Iraq