

## HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND GENDER GAP IN JORDAN



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### ABSTRACT

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During the recent years Jordan has witnessed an increasing awareness of women's issues. Most the successive Jordanian governments were publicly committed to integrating women into the development process, and eliminating all types of discrimination against women and could succeeded in much aspect of women's life, but not on the case of higher education management and top leading posts. therefore this came to critically investigate the women status of women in higher education, to reach this end the study used a descriptive research methodology ,depending in on published data as we as data collected by the researchers from the universities itself. The study found that there is paradoxical situation in Jordanian higher education system, when female students forming more than 50% of the total students enrolled in higher education institutions, we find very few women holding managerial and leadership posts.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study is one of the few studies which have critically investigated the situation of women in higher education management and leadership positions. The primary contribution of this study is to draw policy makers' attention to the fact that women are underrepresented in higher education governing bodies.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education policy is becoming increasingly important on national agendas. The widespread recognition that tertiary education is a major driver of economic competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy has made high-quality tertiary education more important than ever in both industrialized and developing countries (Pundy, 2011) and it is also seen as the main player of Gender equality which is fundamentally related to sustainable development and globally accepted as a necessity for the promotion of human rights. In the context of local government, gender equality is critical as women and men face different challenges in full participation, representation and decent work opportunities. Measures that ensure equitable access to resources and basic services are necessary to obtain an inclusive and gender responsive governance.

Higher education in Jordan plays a key remarkable role in the process of comprehensive development at various levels and areas, due to the limited natural resources, Jordan has concentrated on building its human capital in human resources through education in general and higher education in special, where the later witnessed a

significant progress in terms of the diversity of study programs, patterns of teaching and learning that control both the quality and quantity and expansion of higher education institutions. The country right now exhibits a model of general and higher education in the Arab world. The sector of higher education in Jordan witnessed a prominent development as well as progress evidenced by the increasing number of institutions of higher education which reached twenty seven universities, enrolled students, faculty members, administrative and academic members; size of expenditures and the government support to this significant sector. The most significant change in higher education sector is the female enrollment which has outpaced the male enrollment in total, however with this change in the student body in Jordanian universities it might be assumed that the leadership and higher management of higher education institutions would reflect the demographics of this majority which has not been the case of Jordan, where in proportional term, women in leading positions in Jordanian universities remain very low, the most recent data related to governance in Jordanian universities indicate that women are underrepresented in all leadership ranks and at the presidency level is totally absent. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to critically examine this paradoxical situation, which has developed in the Jordanian higher education institutions.

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study focused in the gender gap in higher education sector in Jordan and attempted to find out answers to the following questions:

1. What is the proportion share of women in higher education sector?
2. What is the proportion share of women governing bodies of Jordanian universities?
3. Why women under represented in governing bodies of Jordanian universities?

### 1.2. Methodology of the Study and Source of Data

This is descriptive study to higher education gender gap therefore the descriptive research methodology is the right one to be followed, the main source of data will be the Ministry of Higher Education publications such as annual reports related to enrollments and employment, while the data related to the governing boards will be collected from the universities websites since it is not available in published form.

### 1.3. Jordanian Legislation and Gender Equality

The Jordanian Constitution have adopted the concept of the principle of equality between males and females with the establishment of the country, where Article (5) of the Basic Law of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the year 1928 states that "There is no difference in rights before the law among Jordanians, even on grounds of race, religion, language" and this was confirmed by the constitutional legislator on this principle again in the current Constitution of 1952, where Article (6/1) of the constitution states "Jordanians are equal before the law, without distinction as to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion", again it has recognized the basic principles of the right to work and equal opportunity for all its citizens in Article 22(I) "Every Jordanian shall be entitled to hold public offices under the conditions prescribed in law or regulations" while article 22(II) "Appointment to public offices, whether permanent or temporary, in the State and the departments attached thereto and the municipalities shall be on the basis of merits and qualifications". Again article 23(1) of the constitution confirms the right of work to all Jordanian by stating "Work is the right of all citizens, and the State shall avail it to Jordanians by directing and improving the national economy"(Jordan's Constitution, n.d). The Labor Law and the Civil Service Ordinance described Workers and employees in gender-neutral ways. However, no provisions specifically prohibit gender discrimination in labor opportunities or in the workplace, and no provisions stress equal salaries for men and women who hold the same positions. The civil service system No.(30) for the year 2007 was among the most important pillars of institutional values that appointment in public office of fairness and

equal opportunities for control . In article 4 of this ordinance mentions the following principles and values: [Civil \(2007\)](#).

- a. Equal opportunity through non- discrimination based on gender, race, religion or social status.
- b. Merit, eligibility, competitiveness in selecting the proper person to hold a vacancy in the civil service in accordance with the principles of justice and equal opportunity.
- c. Justice and equal opportunity in dealing with officers with respect to their job – related rights, obligations and responsibilities.
- d. Transparency and accountability through establishing documented, clear and stated work procedures.
- e. Efficiency in performance and good service to citizens

Consequently, the Higher Education Laws the present and the past ones has no provision for appointment women in public or private universities in any of the leading posts. The Higher Education and Scientific Research Law No. (23), for the year 2009 assigned the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research the many functions related to higher education institutions and implementing the general policy of higher education in Jordan, similarly the law gave the Higher Education Council the main functions of Formulating the general policy of higher education in Jordan, Endorsing the establishment of new higher education institutions, and issuing instructions concerning administration and finance of the higher education sector.

The Jordanian government strongly committed to integrating women into the development process in equal basis, by adopted all the universal standards of eliminating all types of discrimination against women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by the Jordanian government in 1992. However, Jordan has a reservation on Article 9 of the CEDAW that relates to rights of women to pass their nationalities to their husbands and children. Article 16 is also reserved by the state of Jordan, and this article relates to equality within the family in issues of marriage and divorce. In 2009, Jordan, in a very progressive step, cancelled its reservation to Article 15 of the CEDAW concerning the right of women to mobility and the right to choose residence and domicile.

Although the Jordanian legislations, laws and regulations have been devoted spirit of the Jordanian Constitution and its basic principles to emphasize the equality and maintenance of women's rights and equality with men, but the fact is that the presence of women in leadership positions and decision-making is still weak in general and higher education sector in particular where women expected to be fairly presented.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Universally, women access to higher education has shown a great deal of improvement during the last two decades, though this improvement is vary from one region to another, but overall women comprise more than 50% of tertiary students world over, but unfortunately this improvement was limited to access and enrollment only and did not touched other aspects related to women . We find women in the area of higher education, both in teaching and management, are still a long way from participating on the same average as men. Women have made some progress in achieving parity in teaching but are grossly under-represented in higher education management and leadership. Despite the a growing interest of researchers on women in leadership, a very few of them have empirically investigated the leadership and management of female in higher education institutions from gender point of view, A preliminary review of the literature revealed that very few studies are devoted to the leadership of women in educational .

The study of women and leadership/management in general and higher education in particular is newly introduced phenomenon, Leadership as [Sandler \(1993\)](#) puts it, “has been generally associated with men and with male styles of behavior, and because women have not been in leadership positions in great numbers, the mental image of a leader held by most people is male”. [Klenke \(1996\)](#) noted that “most leadership research prior to the 1980’s was carried out by men and dealt almost exclusively with male leaders...because women have been largely

absent in the study of leadership, much of our knowledge of leadership has been derived from the description and analysis of male leaders reported by male researchers...leadership has been synonymous with masculinity". The words of Sandler and the notes of Klenke show that women suffer discriminatory practices when it comes to promotions or appointments to senior positions, Zulu (2007) therefore they were almost absent; many researchers attributed this discrimination to racism, sexism and class.

The primary benefit of educating a woman helps the gender equality in the family and society. Another benefit is the fact that educating women is the best way of empowering women towards their ability to make decisions and stay in power in the society (Neena, 2015). The ILO in 2004 identified that one of the way to break the glass ceiling and improve women's opportunities in the labor market is to develop gender-sensitive human resource strategies, including networking, career tracking mentoring and succession planning. Good school administration is more attuned to feminine than masculine modes of leadership behavior. Female attributes of nurturing, being sensitive, empathetic, intuitive, compromising, caring, cooperative, and accommodative are increasingly associated with effective administration. While these characteristics are innate and valuable, women possessing the qualities of a good leader still face higher attrition and slower career mobility particularly in higher education (Porat, 1991).

UNESCO indicated that across the commonwealth, the percentage of women employed as full time academic staff is just 24%.The found no discernible difference to be seen between the developed countries of the commonwealth and low income countries. In the administrative management positions, women are increasingly disadvantaged as they move up the occupational ladder. Women are still underrepresented among full-time staff in both the academic and administrative hierarchies of commonwealth universities due to person-centered and structure Centered and culture centered (UNESCO, 1993). Syeda *et al.* (2012) in their Explanatory Study of Women Working in the Management of Universities show that work/family conflict and difficulties to exercise authority, exclusion of women from policy formulation are negatively impact on women's career progression. Syeda *et al.* (2013) in the study of Gender and Higher Education in Pakistan, show that women face discrimination in getting professional degree to get higher position. The findings show that there is a gender gap in enrollment and managerial positions in universities. The studies showed number of barriers which discriminate against women such as social, organizational as well as personal. A Canadian study entitled 'Not just the right thing, but the bright thing', looking at public, not-for-profit and private boards, found that boards with three or more women on them showed very different governance behaviors to those with all-male boards (Brown and Anastasopoulos, 2002).

### 2.1. Trends in Jordanian Universities

The sector of higher education in Jordan witnessed a prominent development as well as progress evidenced by the increasing number of institutions of higher education. This progress in numbers of universities accompanied by significant increase in number of students enrolled in these universities. Table no. (1) Shows the development in the enrollment, where the number of enrolled students in both public and private universities is estimated at nearly 267 thousand. The table shows that in 2001/02 the total enrollments at bachelor level was 118657; and increased to 267489 in 2014/15 which means it has increased by 225.4 percent during the 15 years period. The number of female student increased by 237.4 percent during the same period ,i.e., from 58385 in 2000/01 to 138620 in 2014/15, this resulted to an increase in the percentage of female students out of the total, this percentage rose from 49.2percent in 2000/01 to 51.82 percent in 2014/15.similarly at the post graduate level the female enrollment has shown higher growth rate during this 15 years period than the total enrollment which resulted also to an increase in the share of female students to the total ,which has increased from 33.5 percent in 2000/01 to 49.25 percent in 2014/15 . That means if we take the total enrollment in the Jordanian universities we will find that female enrollment has outpaced male enrollment which means more than half of the universities' students are females.

Table-1. Higher Education Enrolment by Gender and Level of Education

	B.A .Degree		Post Graduate Students							
	Total	Female	G. Total		H.Diploma		Master		PhD	
			Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
2000/01	118657	58385	7555	2536	1157	482	5835	1909	563	145
2004/05	178619	89459	13937	4818	1961	773	9875	3487	2101	558
2009/10	224509	115106	19695	9017	2550	1677	14783	6602	2362	738
2014/15	267489	138620	22842	11251	435	304	18562	9431	3845	1516

Source: Ministry of Higher Education Statistical Reports

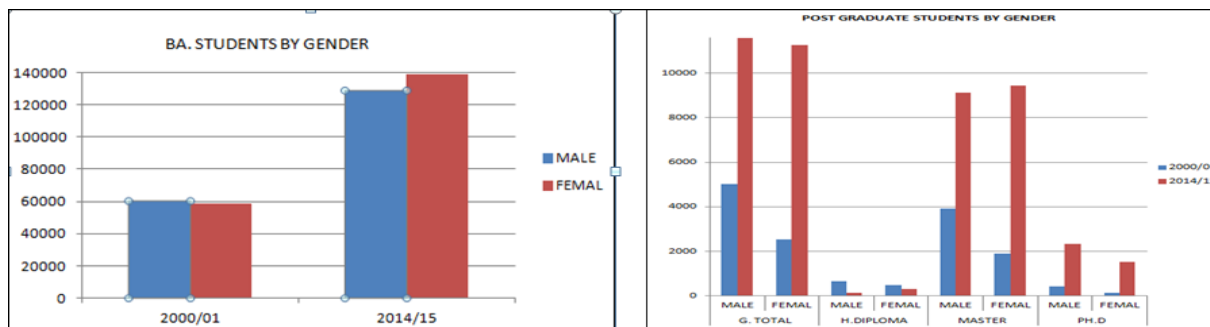


Figure-1. Higher Education Enrolment by Gender and Level of Education

Source: Ministry of Higher Education Statistical Reports

The increasing number of students has caused a similar increase in the administrative staff of these institutions. The data given in table No(2) and figure (2) show that the administrative staff increased from 11217 in 2000/10 to 20428 in 2014/15, and out of this the proportion of females was 24.4% in the year 2000/10 this figure increased to 35.48 percent in 2014/15. However, despite there has been an improvement in the portion of female administrative staff during the 15 years period, but still remains very low if it compared with the proportion of female students.

Table-2. Higher Education Administrative Staff by Gender

	Total	Female	Male
2000/2001	11217	2736(24.4%)	8481(75.6%)
2004/2005	13227	3662	9565
2009/2010	19780	6308	13472
2014/2015	20428	7248(35.48%)	13180(64.52%)

Source: Ministry Of Higher Education Statistical Reports

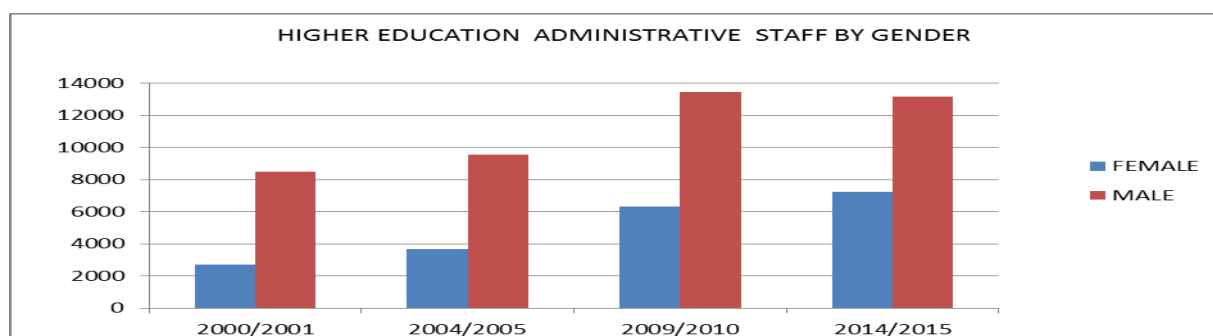


Figure-2. Higher Education Administrative Staff by Gender

Source: Ministry of Higher Education Statistical Reports

As it is shown in table No.3 and figure no.3 also the gender distribution is very skewed at the top with women representing only 13.7% of the teaching staff in Jordanian universities in 2000/01 this proportion was doubled 26.65% in 2014/15. Even with this improvement it remains very low comparing to the percentage of post graduate

females enrollment at the PhD level, where female students forms around 40% of total students at this level. There has been a notable increase in the proportion of women in full professorship which was 1.85% in 2000/01 this has improved to 7.5 percent in 2014/15, similarly the proportions of women in associate and assistant professorship has improved also. - from 7.4% women associate professors in 2000/01 to 14.7% in 2014/15 and from 9.1% for women assistant Professors to 23.9% in 2014/15.the highest proportion of women was found in the lower teaching levels i.e. instructors, lecturers and teaching and research assistant, in all the three levels the women formed 54.2%, 59.4 and 52.9% in 2014/15 of the total teaching staff at this levels respectively.

Table -3. Universities Academic Staff

	G. Total		Full Professor		Associate Professor		Assist Professor.		Instructor		Lecturer		T&R Assistant	
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
2000 /01	4656	637	699	13	911	67	1788	163	539	186	401	87	317	121
2004 /05	5942	998	899	37	1074	86	2312	288	763	263	490	136	404	188
2009 /10	8038	740	1253	71	1491	123	3266	581	910	415	715	335	403	215
2014 /15	10675	283	1762	129	2541	374	3749	897	1278	698	244	145	1101	593

Source: Ministry of Higher Education Statistical Reports

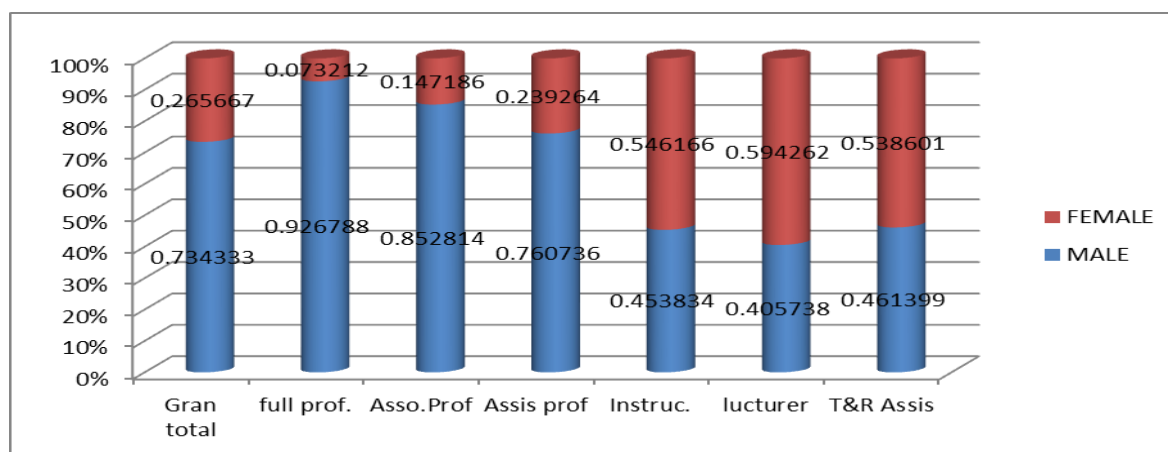


Figure-3. Percentage Distribution Of Teaching Staff By Gender And Academic Level For The Year 2014/2015

Source: Ministry of Higher Education Statistical Reports

Administrative leadership in the university occupies a pivotal role in enabling the university to achieve its goals, and leadership doesn't means that it is limited to men, Legislation Jordan and Jordanian laws do not differentiate between men and women in any public office, including leadership positions in universities. Article (2) of the Law number (20) of 2009 of the Jordanian Universities Law defined the President as University's president, again in Article 12( A) Each university shall have a full-time president appointed for a one time renewable term of four years, provided that he/she is a Jordanian national and had held a post of a professor, Which is very clear that this law doesn't differentiate between male and female in appointment for the post of university president, but the pattern of male prevalence in senior leadership positions is visible Jordanian universities The data in the following table shows in the academic 2016/17 that none of the Jordanian universities has a female as a president. Again at the vice president level and dean's level where both appointments based on the president's recommendation there is no females occupy this post in public universities and only 5 women as vice president in private universities, comparing to 39 male as vice president. However, it cannot be expected that numbers of women in senior management will increase, while so few are employed in academic or administrative positions compared to men, and

that is not because there are not well-qualified for academic positions but because they fail to be selected for this positions.

At the deans level we find only 10.38 percent of Dean's councils members were women, this proportion goes down to 5.7 percents in public universities as in many public universities this ratio goes to zero.

Each university shall have a "board of trustees" consisting of a president and twelve/fourteen members in case of public universities and fifteen members in case of private universities, this board members appointed with the recommendation of Higher Education Council. Many public universities do not have any female member in their board of trustees, but overall the ratio is 4.6 percent of the members of the boards of trustee are female, this percentage goes to 8.2 percent in private universities with two women as president of the board.

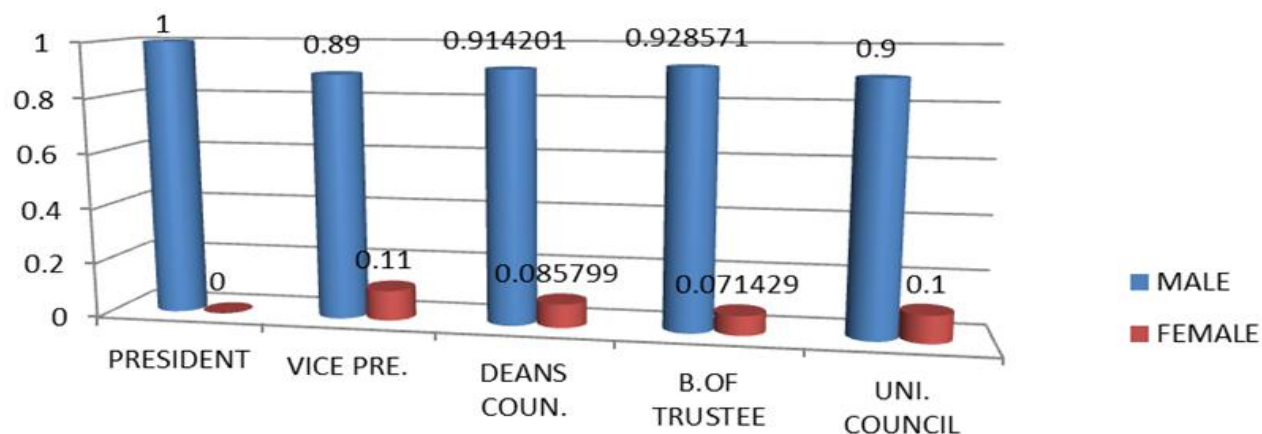


Figure-4. Top Leading Positions and Management in Jordanian Universities 2016/17

Source: calculated from the universities websites for the year 2016/17

It is clear that women continue to be 'vastly under-represented in top positions within the higher education sector' as well as in 'top academic decision-making positions' across Jordanian universities at the time when the Jordanian Government is strongly committed to gender equality, this commitment to gender equality is also demonstrated through the Government's strong focus and initiatives on women's economic security and overall participation in society. The attention given to women's affairs addresses issues related to education is considered to be a positive and civilized step consistent with humanitarian trends and comply with global propositions concerning women's affairs in preparation to enable them to take the appropriate position in different fields, therefore higher education institutions in Jordan should be ready to apply this policy and make more vacancies for women in the leadership level.

### 2.3. Barriers to Women Participation in Higher Education Management and Leading Positions

The importance of improving the gender balance of higher education management and leading posts is increasingly recognized across the world, as it is not social issue only but it has an economic impact also. Lord Davies of Abersoch stated that Companies with more equal representation on their boards outperform those with fewer women, and perform better against all financial indicators. Gender balance on boards is important for good governance and optimizing economic viability (Lord, 2011). The data presented above related to Jordanian universities show that in spite of advances which women have made in higher education enrollment in the past two decades, we find that in the area of higher education management and leading positions, they are still a long way from participating on the same footing as men. Unfortunately, this situation taking place in Jordanian higher education institutions despite of government's declared commitment to social justice and gender equilibrium. The barriers to women to women participating in higher education management and leadership positions are stated in a number of studies can be summaries as below:

Elizabeth (1993) in their study “Women in Higher Education Management” published by UNESCO in 1993, attributed the limited access of women to higher education management and leadership posts to the following point;

1. Limited Access to Higher Education.
2. Discriminatory Appointment and Promotion Practices.
3. Dual Responsibilities of Traditional and Professional Roles.
4. Attitudes of the Spouse.
5. Career Interruptions.
6. Difficulties in Pursuing Research and Gaining Tenure.
7. Alienation from Male Culture.
8. Male Resistance to Women in Management Positions.
9. Absence of Policies and Legislation to Ensure Participation of Women.
10. Stereotyping.

The above mentioned points can be taken as general barriers, though each society and country has its own, and which might be different from other countries. For the case of Jordan very few studies have knocked this subject. The barriers from the available literature are as below:

### 3. CONCLUSION

Our society is a male dominated society. It seems that the world of men and women are different at Jordanian universities in terms of teaching, management and leadership positions. The findings show that women face discrimination in management and leadership positions. From our reading to the laws and constitution which is based on equality, we find a clear gap between policy commitments to gender equality and the implementation of those policies, because it cannot be expected that numbers of women in senior management will increase while so few are employed in academic or administrative positions compared to men. The data shows also that women were totally absent from university leading positions, which means that the improvement was absent also in women's representation in leadership in higher education. At the teaching level the data shows an improvement in the proportion of women teaching staff.

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