INDIAN JOURNAL OF LEGAL AFFAIRS AND RESEARCH

Peer-reviewed, open-access, refereed journal

IJLAR

+91 70421 48991
editor@ijlar.com
www.ijlar.com

DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed in the articles published in the Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the IJLAR, its editorial board, or its affiliated institutions. The IJLAR assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions in the content of the journal. The information provided in this journal is for general informational purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice. Readers are encouraged to seek professional legal counsel for specific legal issues. The IJLAR and its affiliates shall not be liable for any loss or damage arising from the use of the information contained in this journal.

IJLAR

Introduction

Welcome to the Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research (IJLAR), a distinguished platform dedicated to the dissemination of comprehensive legal scholarship and academic research. Our mission is to foster an environment where legal professionals, academics, and students can collaborate and contribute to the evolving discourse in the field of law. We strive to publish high-quality, peer-reviewed articles that provide insightful analysis, innovative perspectives, and practical solutions to contemporary legal challenges. The IJLAR is committed to advancing legal knowledge and practice by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

IJLAR

Preface

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence in legal scholarship. This volume presents a curated selection of articles that reflect the diverse and dynamic nature of legal studies today. Our contributors, ranging from esteemed legal scholars to emerging academics, bring forward a rich tapestry of insights that address critical legal issues and offer novel contributions to the field. We are grateful to our editorial board, reviewers, and authors for their dedication and hard work, which have made this publication possible. It is our hope that this journal will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and will inspire further inquiry and debate within the legal community.

IJLAR

Description

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is an academic journal that publishes peer-reviewed articles on a wide range of legal topics. Each issue is designed to provide a platform for legal scholars, practitioners, and students to share their research findings, theoretical explorations, and practical insights. Our journal covers various branches of law, including but not limited to constitutional law, international law, criminal law, commercial law, human rights, and environmental law. We are dedicated to ensuring that the articles published in our journal adhere to the highest standards of academic rigor and contribute meaningfully to the understanding and development of legal theories and practices.

IJLAR

GENDER AUDIT IN UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: EVALUATING INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, AND DECISION-MAKING REPRESENTATION

AUTHORED BY - RENU PANDEY
Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Rahul School of Education, Meera Road, Thane, Maharashtra

Abstract:

Gender equality in university governance bears directly on institutional accountability, democratic participation, and long-term institutional development. Producers of knowledge, creators of professionals and agents of social change, the way universities govern their world should embody equality, fairness, transparency, and inclusion. However, simply enrolling more women and other underrepresented individuals in the institution will not guarantee their leadership, policy-making, budgeting, or institutional authority. Gender differences may exist at the formal level, at the level of organizational culture, in recruitment and promotion processes or in access to resources or decision-making forums.

This paper explores the use of gender audits for evaluating governance within universities, focusing on institutional policy, resource distribution and who's in whose positions of decision making. It uses a conceptual, qualitative method, based on scholarship, equality principles and institutional gender audits. Consisting of quantitative indicators, policy analysis, stakeholder consultation, and institutional reflection, a gender audit is presented here. It states that to have an effective audit, it needs to go beyond women and men in the numbers. It needs to question who is in decision-making power, and who gets the resources; who influences the policy; who is not included in the processes; who is informing the governance decisions.

Gender disaggregation, gender-friendly budgeting, gender-sensitive planning, gender-inclusive leadership and accountability systems become key issues. In addition, the paper examines the restrictions of purely numerical strategies (tokenism), the missing intersections in equality policies and the failure of formal equality policies to bring about substantive change. It suggests an integrated audit approach involving evidence collection and participatory

assessment, action planning, monitoring and regular review. The paper concludes that gender audits can be a successful instrument to make university governance more equitable as long as they are sufficiently resourced, institutionalized through proper leadership and instated as an institutional duty and contribute to the planned and concrete improvement.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Gender Audit, Gender Inclusive Leadership, Decision Making, Governance.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) contribute to the development of social values, the production of knowledge, the training of the workforce and the preparation for work and civic life. A university is more than an institute of learning. It's a system of academic departments, administrative offices, boards of governance, research centers, student associations and support services. It is in these structures that universities determine their recruitment, promotion, funding for research, curriculum, infrastructure, student welfare and strategy. The distribution of power within them is thus also important for equality and institutional effectiveness.

The indicators used are typically student enrollment, faculty participation, employment and leadership opportunities. These indicators are useful but have limited meaning in terms of gender relations in the governance of universities. An absence of numbers does not indicate whether individuals have the actual authority to make decisions or the same opportunities for access to institutional policies, or the same opportunities for access to financial and/or organizational resources.

A gender audit can be a formal process through which such questions are considered. It looks at the extent to which gender equality is embedded in policy, practice, structure and process at the organisational level in general terms. Can be based on institutional documents, employment data, budgets, decision making processes, stakeholders' experiences, and organizational culture. It is concerned with more than the fact that there are differences between women and men, it is concerned with the institutional process that produce or sustain those differences.

The research on institutional governance and the equality planning makes a case for gender auditing in higher education. For instance, Sherer and Zakaria (2018) investigated and reported that women held 32% of the UK board members in universities. The authors found this figure insufficient as it could not represent the proportion of female staff or students in university.

Their research indicates that representation on governing bodies can only be measured directly, and not based on overall staff levels or the number of students.

Inequality can manifest in more indirect ways. Academic and administrative positions are occasionally allocated informally, by tradition, on the basis of who is best suited to be a leader or as a consequence of unequal opportunity for the profession. Allocation of workload is one of these areas. In a European university, Steinþórsdóttir et al. (2021) looked at how workload was allocated and how it was experienced and found that, despite being described as transparent and fair, the allocation of workload can create inequitable experiences when the institutional practices do not reflect its actual distribution and experience.

These issues are among the many that demand a wide-ranging investigation into university governance. The aim of this paper is to address three inter-related aspects: institutional policies, resource allocation and decision-making representation. They are closely connected. Policies set out formal commitments and procedures, resource allocation affects how equality initiatives are carried out, and representation determines who takes part in setting institutional priorities and who holds authority.

1.2 Problem Statement

Various universities have implemented equal opportunity, non-discrimination, harassment prevention, workplace conduct and inclusion policies. Having such policies, however, does not mean they are implemented effectively. Where a formal institution promotes gender equality, gender bias in leadership, recruitment and resource allocation may exist.

One of the key issues is the disconnect between institutional promises and performance. Gender equality is seen more as an administrative task than a governance issue, incorporated in strategic planning and accountability. It is also possible for universities to gather gender data, without systematically examining representation on committees or budgets, promotion, research leadership, and senior management.

Another challenge is the connection between number and power. Being on a committee or in a leadership role does not equal having the same influence as a man. She may be limited in her involvement by informal power structures, lack of access to information, exclusion from influential networks, or lack of understanding of how leaders are expected to act. Presence and power should thus be examined through gender audits.

There are similar concerns about resource allocation as well. Decisions about funding determine who receives funding for research support, professional development, infrastructure,

mentoring, leadership development, and student services. Although gender is formally neutral in allocation procedures, they can perpetuate gender inequalities.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this paper is to examine the role of gender audits in evaluating gender equality within university governance.

The specific objectives are:

1. To explain the conceptual significance of gender audits in higher education governance.
2. To examine how institutional policies can be evaluated from a gender equality perspective.
3. To analyze the relevance of gender-responsive resource allocation in university administration.
4. To discuss the importance of gender representation in institutional decision-making structures.
5. To identify methodological approaches for conducting gender audits in universities.
6. To propose an integrated framework for using gender audit findings to improve institutional accountability and equality.

1.4 Research Questions

The paper addresses the following research questions:

1. How can gender audits be used to evaluate gender equality in university governance?
2. What institutional policy areas should be examined during a gender audit?
3. How can resource allocation be assessed for potential gender-related disparities?
4. Why is representation in decision-making positions important for institutional equality?
5. What methodological and organizational challenges affect the effectiveness of gender audits?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This paper is relevant to university administrators, academic leaders, policymakers, equality committees, faculty members, researchers, and institutional quality assurance professionals. It presents gender auditing as a process of institutional learning and accountability rather than a one-time compliance exercise.

The study may also help universities develop more evidence-based gender equality plans,

strengthen their data systems, and identify where governance processes need improvement. Its conceptual approach can be adapted to different higher education contexts, although the indicators and procedures used should fit national legislation, institutional structures, and the data available.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualizing Gender Audit

Gender audit: A systematic process to review an organisation's structures, policies, practices and decisions on resource allocation to assess their impact on gender equality. It often involves quantitative data and a qualitative investigation to find disparities, their root causes, and institutional responses.

Gender auditing is related to gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is the process of incorporating gender considerations into policy and programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A gender audit can be a tool for diagnosis and accountability in this larger framework. It does not take it for granted that general institutional policies are equally experienced and implemented by all groups but asks how they are experienced and implemented across gender groups.

A gender audit in university governance can analyse the makeup of governing bodies, recruitment and promotion processes, institutional policy language, committee membership, the allocation of budgets, workload, research opportunities or complaints of discrimination or harassment. Its reach should be more than just the formal life of equality policies, but into their operational effects.

An example of an institutional framework that takes account of governance and policy review is the Gender Equality at Higher Education Institutions audit tool. Its initial study results evaluated the presence of women within management and governance structures and checked if institutional policies foster and safeguard gender equality and non-discrimination. These strategies demonstrate that it is important to consider organizational composition and institutional rules.

A gender audit is not the same as an evaluation that equates any differences with discrimination. If there are disparities in outcomes, they must be analysed in the context. For instance, differences in representation could be due to historical recruitment trends, discipline composition, a gap in career, institutional selection or other factors. A gender audit should therefore highlight differences and should analyse evidence on the causes of these differences

and separate areas where a difference is identified from those where further research is needed.

2.2 Gendered Organizations and University Governance

The theory of gendered organizations offers a valuable starting point in the understanding of how institutional structures can perpetuate gender inequalities. Acker (1990) proposed that organizational processes, such as division of labor, symbols, interactions, and organizational logic were not necessarily gender neutral. Institutions can become infiltrated with presumptions about the ideal worker, authority, availability, and professional commitment.

Many universities have a hierarchical process of decision making. There is a hierarchy in the authority of senior leadership, academic councils, departmental committees, selection panels and administrative units. This can lead to gender inequality if there is unequal access to these structures, or if there is a difference in the importance attached to types of expertise and leadership.

Relationships of formal authority and informal influence should therefore be considered in the study of university governance. A gender audit may look at who is included in decision making institutions and who is chairing committees, who is getting to decide on policy, and whether there is a focus on less institutionalised areas.

Sherer and Zakaria (2018) provide a good example of the relevance of these issues in their study on gender imbalance in the governing bodies of UK universities. They reviewed representation of women on boards and found differences among the various types of universities. The argument that the governing-body composition is an important indicator of equality (but not the only one) is supported by such findings.

2.3 Institutional Policies and Gender Equality

Institutional policies define the rules and procedures by which universities govern themselves, within which employment takes place, academic work is conducted, students are cared for, research is conducted, complaints are handled, promotions are made, and the university is governed. Policies can either be written with gender equality in mind or be gender neutral and have different impacts on different groups of people.

There is a need for a gender audit to address both the content of the policy and its implementation. The content analysis may include whether policies include the following: clear equality commitments, clear definitions of responsibilities, procedures to address discrimination, and monitoring mechanisms. Implementation analysis should explore if the

policies are communicated, resourced, monitored, and applied consistently.

Clavero and Galligan (2021) explored the issue of gender equality plans in higher education based on an epistemic justice perspective. In this they argue that gender inequality needs to be seen in the context of power and justice and not simply as a lack of talent being utilised. This viewpoint is relevant to the policy audit because an increase in participation can be achieved without taking into account unequal authority, recognition or access to institutional resources.

Policies should also be evaluated on unintended consequences. For instance, a leadership development program might be offered to everyone but might not have considered the unequal opportunity to be mentored, to have time, to have access to a professional network, or to be sponsored informally by others. In the same way, a workload policy could cover all personnel equally and not take into account responsibility for services.

Timmers et al. (2010) created a multi-perspective approach to analysing policies on gender diversity in universities. It is through their work, that one can illustrate the importance of taking into account different policy measures and the conditions in which they might be effective. Consequently, a university gender audit should evaluate the appropriateness of the policies and whether they yield the intended outcomes, and whether they are monitored.

2.4 Resource Allocation and Gender Equality

The allocation of resources is an integral part of institutional governance. Financial, human, infrastructural, and organizational resources are shared by universities in decision making processes related to budgets, staffing, research funds, training, facilities, student services, administrative priorities, etc.

Gender auditing of the allocation of resources does not mean that all expenditures should be split between women and men. Instead, it looks to see if allocation processes are fair, transparent, evidence-based and responsive to documented differences in needs and opportunities. Equal treatment/ equitable outcomes may include taking into account institutional barriers and inequal start positions.

Relevant questions include:

- Who receives research grants, travel support, and professional development opportunities?
- Are leadership training programs accessible to staff across genders and employment categories?
- How are academic and administrative workloads distributed?

- Do student support services respond to different gender-related safety and participation concerns?
- Are gender equality initiatives supported through identifiable budgets and responsible offices?
- Are resource decisions monitored for their effects on representation and institutional participation?

The allocation of workload is important, as addressed by Steinþórsdóttir et al. (2021). Their study points to the distinction between procedural fairness and actual perceptions of fairness. This distinction is useful because it allows for a clear process to produce unequal results if there are shortcomings in the criteria, assumptions or institutional context.

Policy and outcome-based resource allocation should therefore be audited. Formal budgetary rules need to be recognised as do actual distribution patterns. When discrepancies are found, the auditor should check institutional factors that may have contributed to the discrepancy and refrain from assuming that the differences are due to gender without supporting documentation.

2.5 Decision-Making Representation

Representation refers to the participation of different groups in the structures where institutional decisions are made. In universities, these include governing boards, academic councils, selection committees, departmental leadership, research committees, quality assurance bodies, and student-related decision-making forums.

Gender representation can be evaluated through several indicators:

1. Numerical composition of decision-making bodies.
2. Distribution of leadership and chairperson roles.
3. Participation in high-authority committees.
4. Representation across academic disciplines and administrative levels.
5. Access to agenda-setting and policy formulation.
6. Participation in recruitment, promotion, and resource allocation decisions.

Representation is not just about equal numbers. Women can be represented on a decision-making body, and yet have practices that restrict their influence. Attendance, speaking opportunities, committee roles and responsibilities, decision making and, if applicable, participant experience are therefore all areas for audit.

Brescianini et al (2023) suggested a methodology on inclusive governance in gender equality planning of the University. Their framework focuses on actors and roles, legitimacy and

delegation, and the participation process; they also remind us that the quality of participation is as important as the formal structure of governance.

In this regard, Kamwendo (2024) provides an African example through a cross sectional gender audit of selected universities (University of Malawi, Malawi University of Science and Technology, Mzuzu University). The study found that male dominance persists at all three institutions and blamed this on the patriarchy, gender unblind promotion and institutional resistance. It has recommended that women's research career should be supported and that the institutional gender policies should be revised. The results point to an audit approach that focuses on promotion criteria and institutional culture and on formal membership of governance bodies.

2.6 Gender Equality Plans and Institutional Change

Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) provide a framework for identifying gender gaps, establishing targets, taking action and tracking progress. These plans can be used during the planning, development or revision of them, and can draw on gender audits to provide information on conditions.

However, an audit doesn't necessarily result in change. The report may be issued as a finding of differences but not lead to policy changes or budgetary promises or changes in leadership practice. This is why it is important that an effective audit has clear accountability for follow-up and how progress will be measured.

Clavero and Galligan (2021) point out that gender equality plans are not easy to implement in terms of transformative change. They argue that institutional interventions should focus on the unequal distribution of power, organizational cultures and resources, not just on formal policy commitments.

A gender audit can therefore be understood as part of a continuous governance cycle:

Assessment → Consultation → Analysis → Action Planning → Implementation → Monitoring → Reassessment

This cycle allows universities to treat equality as an ongoing institutional responsibility.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This paper presents a conceptual and qualitative approach that draws upon a qualitative review of scholarly literature and existing institutional gender audit protocols. It makes no claims of

original survey results, and it does not claim to have conducted a ‘gender audit' at any specific university. It instead makes use of the reviewed literature to create a framework of analysis for assessing gender equality in university governance.

It is appropriate to apply a conceptual approach to the topic as gender auditing covers multiple aspects of institutional practice: policy design, budgetary processes, organisational representation and informal decision making systems. These dimensions require interpretation as well as if quantitative indicators.

The methodology focuses on three principal domains:

1. Institutional policies and implementation.
2. Resource allocation and organizational opportunities.
3. Representation and participation in decision-making.

The analysis also considers accountability, intersectionality, and the distinction between formal equality and substantive equality.

3.2 Sources of Information

The study draws on peer-reviewed academic research, institutional gender-audit materials, and scholarly discussions of gender equality planning in higher education. The literature covers university governing bodies, institutional gender diversity policies, workload allocation, participatory governance, and gender equality plans.

The literature was selected for its relevance to the research objectives. Priority went to studies that treat gender equality as an institutional and governance issue rather than concentrating only on individual experiences or general participation statistics.

The sources include Acker (1990), Timmers et al. (2010), Sherer and Zakaria (2018), Clavero and Galligan (2021), Steinþórsdóttir et al. (2021), Brescianini et al. (2023), and Kamwendo (2024). Together they offer conceptual and empirical perspectives on organizational structures, policy interventions, resource allocation, inclusive governance, and gender audits in practice.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The proposed analytical framework has five interconnected stages.

Stage 1: Institutional Mapping

The first step involves establishing the formal governing structure of a University, which includes the Governing Body, the Executive Leadership, the Academic Councils, the Departmental Administration, the Committees, and other bodies involved in decision making

of the University as a whole.

The goal is to figure out who exercises authority and which role(s) to look into. There should be a distinction between advisory bodies and those with decision making power.

Stage 2: Gender-Disaggregated Data Collection

The second stage collects relevant data disaggregated by gender, where this is legally and ethically appropriate. The data may include:

- Student and staff composition.
- Faculty and administrative leadership.
- Governing-body membership.
- Committee membership and chairperson roles.
- Recruitment and promotion outcomes.
- Research funding and professional development participation.
- Workload distribution.
- Participation in institutional equality initiatives.

Data needs to be looked at carefully. Categories of gender should be clearly communicated and should not presume to include all gender identities and experiences. Universities can use more inclusive methods to gather gender data if such data are required by data protection rules and if there is enough data volume.

Stage 3: Policy and Resource Analysis

The third stage looks at formal policies and resource allocation processes. The equality commitments of policies are checked, implementation procedures, responsibilities and monitoring are checked.

The resource analysis asks the question about the support of equality initiatives and the distribution of opportunities via transparent and accountable procedures. It does not imply that different results are the consequence of discriminatory choices. The goal is to pinpoint the issue(s) that deserves some more investigation.

Stage 4: Participatory Consultation

The fourth stage incorporates the experiences and views of stakeholders. Institutional practices not captured by administrative data can be uncovered through interviews, focus groups, surveys or consultation meetings.

Brescianini et al. (2023) suggests a mixed methods design to assess participatory governance for planning gender equality through interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. This can be modified for university gender audits.

Academic employees, administrative employees, students, representatives of leadership, and representatives of equality or grievance committees should participate in the event. Protective measures should be put in place to ensure confidentiality and to minimise the likelihood of reprisals.

Stage 5: Findings, Action Planning, and Monitoring

The final step is to collate the evidence and develop an action plan. Findings should include strengths, gaps, possible institutional barriers and recommended interventions.

Action plans should include an identification of which offices are responsible, what should be expected to happen, the timeframe and monitoring indicators. Review and share progress regularly, as appropriate through institutional channels.

3.4 Proposed Indicators

The following indicators may be used as part of a university gender audit.

Domain	**Illustrative indicators**
Institutional policies	Equality policies, implementation mechanisms, complaint procedures, policy review frequency
Governance representation	Gender composition of governing bodies, leadership roles, committee membership
Resource allocation	Research funding, training opportunities, institutional support, gender-equality budget
Recruitment and promotion	Recruitment patterns, promotion rates, leadership pathways, transparency of selection
Workload	Teaching, research, administration, committee service, mentoring responsibilities
Participation	Consultation opportunities, decision-making influence, representation in agenda-setting
Accountability	Assigned responsibilities, reporting mechanisms, monitoring indicators, corrective action

The indicators should be adapted to a university's size, structure, and legal context, and they should not be read as a universal scoring system. A single numerical score can oversimplify complex institutional conditions and hide important differences between departments or groups

of employees.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical practice must be incorporated into the entire process of gender auditing, as it is a sensitive institutional and personal process. Data collection must be in accordance with the relevant privacy and legal obligations and participation in interviews or surveys must be voluntary.

Staff and/or students reporting discrimination, unequal treatment, harassment, or barriers to advancement are most at risk of confidentiality. Individuals should not be targeted for institutional retaliation as a result of audit processes.

Intersectionality should also be taken into account by the auditors. Gender related experiences may also be affected by other social conditions, such as caste, class, disability, age, religion, sexuality, employment status and other factors, and a gender audit may fail to identify significant levels of inequality. Meanwhile, the intersectional analysis needs to be done responsibly, with adequate data protections, and without imposing unwarranted assumptions on people.

3.6 Limitations

The paper is conceptual and is based on a small number of published works and therefore, the suggested framework and indicators are not empirically tested. The reviewed sources are mostly from European context with one African case, and the applicability of the framework to other national institutional contexts such as India, can be piloted tested by conducting audits. The framework could be applied to individual universities in the future and indicators could be developed with the stakeholders.

4. Discussion

4.1 Gender Audit as a Governance and Accountability Mechanism

Research shows that the use of gender auditing can enhance institutional accountability by increasing the visibility of gender differences. Many universities have large amounts of administrative information which is not integrated in a systematic equality assessment. A gender audit can be used to link those statistics to policies, decision-making and its stakeholders' experiences.

Its institutional importance is in its implications for the structure of authority and opportunity.

A university can have a reasonably balanced staff in terms of gender but lack gender equality in a senior leadership role, in research governance or in an influential committee. It was therefore crucial that a governance audit does not substitute for a look at the specific governance structures for decision-making.

Sherer and Zakaria (2018) conducted a study on governance in UK universities, which reveals the importance of analysing governance specifically. They discovered that despite a relatively balanced representation of women in the broader university community, there was gender imbalance on University boards. This contrast shows the need to look at the relationship between institutional participation and formal authority.

A gender audit can also clarify the transparency by deciding which office(s) will be accountable for gender equality policies. Unclear responsibilities make policy commitments difficult to monitor. The audit should therefore focus on the interdependence of the policy ownership, institutional leadership and financial support, and reporting mechanisms.

4.2 Institutional Policies: From Formal Commitment to Implementation

Policies are important because they establish expectations and procedures. But a written policy is just one indicator that institutions are committed. It will only be successful if it is communicated, implemented, staff is able to, leadership supports, and there is a system for addressing concerns.

A gender audit is a process that should consider whether policies are:

1. Clearly defined and accessible.
2. With institutional responsibilities in place.
3. In line with the applicable laws and regulations.
4. Based on gender-disaggregated evidence (where applicable).
5. Periodically reviewed.
6. With training and awareness activities.
7. Related to monitoring and accountability.

This is a particularly important difference between formal and substantive equality. Formal equality is to treat all people the same. Substantive equality requires whether the current environment and institutional structures continue to generate unequal outcomes. A standard written procedure in a university can miss out on providing equal access to mentoring, research networks, leadership opportunities or institutional support.

Clavero and Galligan (2021) emphasize that a justice and power perspective must be taken on

gender equality. This prompts institutions to consider if their equality policies relate to how people are recognised, given authority and access to resources.

Look into a leadership development initiative which is accessible to everyone in the organisation. An audit could evaluate participation, access to information, selection criteria and leadership opportunities that result. If women or other under-represented groups are under-represented, the institution may want to examine the pertinent institutional issues, rather than assuming that it is because of individual preferences or capabilities.

Complaint and grievance mechanisms must be addressed as well. An institution can have an official complaint or grievance procedure but an audit can determine if this is known to everyone, whether it is accepted by those reporting the incident and whether incidents are reported in accordance with the procedure.

4.3 Resource Allocation and Institutional Priorities

One of the most significant elements of governance is determining resource allocation, which determines which activities are able to get real support from institutions. One indicator of a commitment to gender equality within a university is the provision of staff time, funding, training and administrative capacity to gender equality-related activities.

A direct allocation should be assessed along with an indirect allocation. Among the direct allocations are support for gender equality offices, awareness programs, leadership development, research support, and safety measures. Access to travel funds, laboratory resources, mentoring, administrative support and professional networks are all examples of indirect allocation.

Academic and administrative burden are among the important issues. If some staff are assigned with excessive workload of service, mentoring, and committees without compensation, their research, promotion and professional development opportunities may be diminished. Workload allocation is a place where gendered institutional practice is highlighted (Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2021).

An audit should then consider the transparency of workload procedures and the monitoring of the distribution of responsibility. It should include teaching, research, administration, committee work, students, and informal work in the organization.

Gender responsive resource allocation is not synonymous with equal allocation of resources to each gender group. It involves looking at reasons for differences and considering whether the response from the institution is justifiable, clear and aligned with equality goals.

Where women are under-represented within the recipient base of research funding, consideration should be given to application rates, selection processes, disciplinary make-up, stage of career and eligibility criteria. These factors can help demonstrate if there is a difference due to unequal opportunity, institutional barriers, or other factors.

In conducting resource audits, gender should not be seen as the only possible explanation for any disparity. A responsible audit separates descriptive patterns from causal conclusions and if evidence is inadequate, it suggests further investigation.

4.4 Decision-Making Representation and Institutional Authority

Institutional equality is a key part of representation in university governance, as institutional decisions affect opportunity, access to resources and professional recognition. But meaningful representation requires more than just the numbers.

The composition of decision making bodies and the distribution of decision making authority should be considered during an audit. Relevant questions include:

1. Is there a gender balance in decision making institutions such as government and academia?
2. Who are the Chairpersons and Leadership?
3. Do committees have significant budgetary/personnel power that include different gender groups?
4. Can participants help shape the agenda and policy making?
5. Are governance processes inclusive in terms of the availability of information and opportunities to contribute?
6. Are the experiences of staff and students considered in institutional planning?

The relevance of Brescianini et al. (2023) lies in their discussion on inclusive governance that adopts an actor-centred perspective, focusing on the role, the legitimacy of actors, the process of delegation, and the process of participation. Their model suggests that an audit should address the structure of governance participation and not just the number of participants.

A committee may be gender balanced but if decisions are made in advance or there is uneven information sharing, or if some members are not invited to informal discussions, then some members will have little influence. Assessment of the quality of participation should therefore be combined with formal representation.

Level of governance should also be separated in audit. Representation on a general advisory committee is not the same as representation on a committee that advises on faculty recruitment,

promotion, budget or strategic planning.

Let's give separate attention to a leadership role. Women could appear in middle-management roles but be less visible in leadership roles, which could call for a review of leadership paths, mentoring and promotion criteria, and institutional culture within universities. Kamwendo's (2024) audit of Malawi raises awareness about these avenues and why they need to be scrutinized because the promotion criteria are described as gender blind.

4.5 Intersectionality and Diversity Within Gender Groups

Gender groups are not homogeneous, and audits should recognize this. Women, men, and gender-diverse people may experience institutions differently depending on their social and professional circumstances.

An intersectional approach looks at how gender interacts with other dimensions of inequality, including caste, class, disability, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and employment status. These intersections can shape access to leadership, professional networks, institutional recognition, and support services.

In Indian higher education, intersectional analysis can be especially relevant because social identity and institutional position may shape professional opportunities. Institutions must nonetheless make sure that data collection and reporting comply with applicable privacy and ethical requirements.

An audit should not assume that more women in leadership automatically resolves every gender-related inequality. Women may be represented in leadership while particular groups of women remain underrepresented in senior academic or administrative positions. Numerical improvement may likewise leave concerns about institutional culture, authority, or workload untouched.

Intersectionality thus widens the audit from a comparison of women and men to a closer look at how different groups experience university governance.

4.6 Challenges in Implementing Gender Audits

Although gender audits can support institutional improvement, implementing them presents several challenges.

4.6.1 Limited or Inconsistent Data

Universities may not keep complete, current, or comparable gender-disaggregated data. Records are often scattered across human resources, academic departments, finance offices,

and committee files, and differences in definitions and reporting practices make comparison difficult.

Institutions should develop consistent indicators and clear procedures for collecting and reporting data. Missing data, however, is no excuse for ignoring equality concerns.

4.6.2 Institutional Resistance

The gender audit could highlight differences that question the existing norms or the institution's credibility. An equality assessment, if read by some stakeholders, can be interpreted as an attack on current leadership and/or administration.

Institutional leaders can respond by communicating audits as evidence-based governance processes and establishing processes for discussing the results. Communication should be transparent and participative, and can help to eliminate defensiveness, but this does not resolve institutional resistance.

4.6.3 Tokenistic Compliance

An institution can conduct an audit but without making any substantive changes. The audit then becomes a report, rather than a learning process.

To limit such risk, the audit results should be linked to specific actions, should be passed on to a specific person and should include monitoring indicators, and leadership should be held accountable for reviewing progress and taking action to address gaps found.

4.6.4 Overreliance on Numerical Indicators

Although numbers are important they're not the only thing that matters. Incorporating statistics about the under-representation of women in leadership without offering an account of why this is the case, or how people experience processes within institutions.

Administrative data does not always reveal barriers that can be detected through qualitative evidence. However, it also has to be analysed in an systematic way and cannot be transferred to other contexts without further proof.

4.6.5 Resource and Capacity Constraints

The implementation of gender audits demands skills, time, data management and institutional will. Extensive audits may be difficult to do at smaller schools or schools with limited resources.

Help can come in the form of a proportionate approach. A priority governance area, a limited number of indicators, and a progressive audit can begin at universities. Limited resources do not excuse institutions from taking action on serious equality issues.

4.7 Proposed Integrated Framework for University Gender Auditing

Based on the reviewed literature, this paper proposes an integrated framework with six dimensions:

Dimension	Central audit question
Policy	Do institutional policies establish and implement gender equality commitments?
Governance	Are authority and decision-making roles equitably accessible?
Resources	Are opportunities and institutional resources allocated through fair and transparent processes?
Participation	Do stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions?
Organizational culture	Do formal and informal practices support inclusion and equal recognition?
Accountability	Are findings translated into actions, monitoring, and institutional review?

The framework should be applied through a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Data analysis can reveal patterns, while stakeholder consultation helps explain the experiences and processes behind them.

A practical audit process may include the following steps:

1. Institutional commitment: Establish leadership approval and define the audit's scope.
2. Governance mapping: Identify decision-making structures and positions of authority.
3. Data collection: Gather relevant gender-disaggregated administrative and financial information.
4. Policy assessment: Review institutional rules and implementation mechanisms.
5. Stakeholder consultation: Collect perspectives through ethically conducted interviews, surveys, or focus groups.
6. Evidence analysis: Identify patterns, gaps, and areas requiring further investigation.
7. Action planning: Develop specific, measurable, and appropriately resourced responses.
8. Monitoring: Review implementation and revise interventions where necessary.

This framework is a conceptual model, not a validated universal audit instrument. Institutions should pilot it, assess its relevance, and adapt the indicators to their own governance systems.

4.8 Implications for University Leadership

Leadership at the University is crucial in driving improvements when conducting gender audits. Senior administrators and governing bodies will help to facilitate effective audits by making data available, giving it institutional responsibility, securing appropriate resources, and establishing follow-up systems.

The leadership commitment should be reflected in strategic plans, institutional policies, budget processes, and governance processes. Initiatives for equality will be more likely to endure if they are integrated into the normal working of the institution, rather than being the responsibility of an ad hoc committee or individual staff member.

An increase in institutional quality is also associated with gender equality. These bring transparency to governance, fair employment processes, participation and access to opportunity to create a more accountable and supportive environment in the organization.

Simultaneously, gender audits should not be employed to make unsubstantiated claims on institutional performance. Findings should be based on documented evidence, clearly defined indicators and appropriate analysis which increases the credibility of the audit and helps to support constructive decision-making.

5. Conclusion

Gender auditing provides a systematic means of university governance equity assessments. Institutional policies, resource allocation, and decision-making representation can help provide insight into inequities that may not be apparent in participation statistics. The process can help create transparency, institutional accountability, and evidence to inform planning.

This paper has contended that gender auditing should not be limited to the presence of a representation of women and men. They should look at processes for how policies are carried out, how authority is given, who has access to resources, how work is shared and if people have opportunities to participate meaningfully. Inclusion in decision-making mechanisms is important, but it is only as powerful as the opportunities given to participants to have an impact on institutional priorities and decisions.

The literature also emphasizes formal and substantive equality. Institutional policies can offer uniform procedures, and not account for the structural and cultural conditions that create unequal outcomes. A gender audit should thus be a mix of administrative data and qualitative investigations and participation of stakeholders.

University governance is a very important aspect, especially with regard to resource allocation.

Opportunities for various groups are influenced by funding, professional development, research support, workload distribution, and institutional services. Gender responsive auditing can be used to detect possible differences and to assess the transparency, justification and equity of resource allocation processes in universities consistent with equality commitments.

The study suggests an integrated framework consisting of policy, governance, resources, participation, organizational culture, and accountability. Implementing it will involve commitment from leaders, accurate data, ethical protections, and stakeholder involvement, as well as regular monitoring. The audit report is not the end of the line for change. Whether institutions translate findings into action and facilitate the implementation of that action is critical to making lasting progress.

Intersectionality should also be included in gender audits and differences within gender groups should be recognised. Universities should not reduce gender equality to only a numerical measure, nor should they equate all disparities of institutions with the same causes. It is essential to have analysis based on evidence, a sense of the context and responsible data practices.

Finally, gender audits can be useful tools for improving equality and accountability in universities that wish to use them as a governance instrument. They are effective if seen as "processes of learning and development" instead of 'compliance checks'. A university with inclusive governance should not only question: who is in the institution, but also: who has access to authority, resources, recognition and meaningful participation in decision making?

References

Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. Gender & Society, 4(2), 139–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002

Brescianini, A., Federici, C., & Bannò, M. (2023). How inclusive governance should drive gender equality in universities: A proposed methodology. About Gender. International Journal of Gender Studies, 12(24). https://doi.org/10.15167/2279-5057/AG2023.12.24.2233

Clavero, S., & Galligan, Y. (2021). Delivering gender justice in academia through gender equality plans? Normative and practical challenges. Gender, Work & Organization, 28(3), 1115–1132. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12658

Kamwendo, J. C. (2024). Gendering the decision-making positions in higher education: A cross-sectional gender audit in three selected universities in Malawi. African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies, 6(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.51415/ajims.v6i1.1921

Sherer, M., & Zakaria, I. (2018). Mind that gap! An investigation of gender imbalance on the governing bodies of UK universities. Studies in Higher Education, 43(4), 719–736. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2016.1196352

Steinþórsdóttir, F. S., Brorsen Smidt, T., Pétursdóttir, G. M., Einarsdóttir, T., & Holst, C. (2021). Gendered workload allocation in universities: A feminist analysis of practices and possibilities in a European University. Gender, Work & Organization, 28(S2), 964–982. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12709

Timmers, T. M., Willemsen, T. M., & Tijdens, K. G. (2010). Gender diversity policies in universities: A multi-perspective framework of policy measures. Higher Education, 59, 719–735. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9276-z

IJLAR