

Gender Inequality in Thai Academia

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(Abstract)

This exploratory research is a case study of a public university in Thailand. The research examines whether gender inequality exists in the pay raise process at Khon Kaen University over a two-fiscal year period (FY2002 and 2003). It also considers what factors might account for differences between male and female faculty in pay raises at this university, looking at factors such as productivity and family responsibilities. The research develops and tests measures of the Southeast Asian concepts of kinship, patronage, turn-taking and seniority systems. Three data sources are used, university personnel records, self-administered surveys and the annual evaluation report.

Results show that raises tend to be equitable and faculty are equally productive, regardless of gender, discipline, academic rank, or position cluster. When significant differences are identified in this study, female faculty frequently reported that they received higher pay raises than their male colleagues. The well-established rules and regulations regarding pay raises (minimum requirements for productivity and pay raise steps) at this university prohibit any kind of systematic bias in pay raises. One of the other goals of this research was to test the Southeast Asian concepts of kinship, patronage, turn taking and seniority, and the extent to which each may be a factor in performance and pay raises. The research indicates these four may play a role, but their actual influence is not entirely clear and will require additional study.

To address some of these issues, future research would explore the same public university with a longer time frame and then compare the result at KKU with other universities in Thailand and other universities in Southeast Asia. Interviewing both male and female faculty members in terms of their actual workloads, productivity, assigned tasks, and their perceptions of the impact of age and administrative position is recommended. Interviewing only female faculty members in different disciplines (female-dominated, male-dominated and balanced disciplines) concerning their experiences of inequality and how they deal with family responsibilities that affect productivity is also important for future research.