

Women in mathematics, engineering and computer science: literature review and study

The University of Peradeniya's Faculty of Engineering is presently undergoing a major expansion by revising, revamping and expanding its curricular offerings. As part of this process, new programmes are being initiated this year in computer sciences at both master's and bachelor's levels.

Being mindful of the university's commitment to diversity and gender equality, and as a precaution, the authors were keen that women should have full access to the new programmes being offered. This study therefore involves three parts. One a survey of the literature on the success or otherwise of women with respect to mean in mathematics. There is evidence as reported in Education Technology Research and Development (Vol.39, No.2) that women do not perform as well and that when steps such as female-only classes are taken within the computer sciences programme (over which the authors have some control) to give female students an equal footing. Second, this study also tracks the performance with respect to men in the light of their rank at entrance. The third part of the study examines the performance of female students in computer science subjects to see if the heavy reliance among computer science students on peer and after hours learning places women at any disadvantage.