

Gender Mainstreaming at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU): Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT: Gender Mainstreaming is imperative in contemporary development planning. It is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality especially in institutions of higher education. Universities are crucial centres for change and gender mainstreaming their curriculum, enrolments, and general operation is crucial as it will enable them to fulfil this mandate. Enhancing quality education by women and men, and removing gender stereotyping in the curriculum, career choices and the professions is the sine qua non for sustainable development. In this respect, obstacles to women's participation in higher education need to be minimised or eradicated completely. Therefore, recruitment, enrolments, promotions and organisational structures need to be gender mainstreamed. This research involved extensive documentary reviews. Interviews with key selected stakeholders, representative of students, academic and administrative staff and top-decision makers and implementers were also conducted. The paper suggests that the application of a gender mainstreaming strategy is possible, though complex. The case study institution analysed shows some progress but there are still many challenges relating to structural issues, sustainability, policy formulation, the commitment of actors involved, and the whole aspect of attitudinal change both at individual level and collectively for the university .

KEYWORDS: Gender, Gender Auditing, Gender Budgeting, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Planning.

1 BACKGROUND

Gender disparities in various societal organisations have been a subject of ongoing research initiatives. Gender mainstreaming is imperative in contemporary development planning. Gender Mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality [1] Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy or an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy / dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects. Universities are crucial centres for change in terms of research and manpower development and gender mainstreaming their curriculum, enrolments, and general operation is crucial as it will enable them to fulfil this mandate. Enhancing quality education by women and men, and removing gender stereotyping in the curriculum, career choices and the professions is the *sine qua non* for sustainable development [1]. In this respect, obstacles to women's participation in higher education need to be eradicated. Therefore, recruitment, enrolments, promotions and organizational structures need to be gender mainstreamed. The underlying argument of the paper is that the higher education sector in Zimbabwe and more specifically at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) is not "sufficiently" gender mainstreamed. This is so in spite of the fact that as early as 1992, the University of Zimbabwe, the oldest university in the country and the one that gave birth to ZOU adopted affirmative action policy. Gender is the socially determined division of roles and responsibilities and power between men and women. These socially constructed roles are usually unequal in terms of power and decision making. These inequalities are also manifest in control over assets and events, freedom of action and ownership of resources, among others [2] Furthermore, gender roles and responsibilities are culturally specific and can change over time, sometimes being rapidly influenced by socio- economic and technological change. The ZOU has its

own gender culture that is relationships between women and men, e.g. in whose hands are the most powerful positions, who has access to more resources, and who has stronger networks which they can appropriate to their own ends.

2 GENDER IN UNIVERSITIES

University education is one of the most key institutions responsible for re-thinking and re-defining reality thus a key to change. Gender is one of the changes that need to be addressed. Research and development are major sources of knowledge, and universities are responsible for creating new knowledge, new values and attitudes. Universities play a critical role in mapping out feasible potential directions that Zimbabwe can take, whilst taking into consideration the historical context. The impact of gender disparities is a negation of the fundamental principles underpinning the existence of universities. [3] asserts that: "In order for universities to be leaders and role models for democracy they must themselves practice the politics of inclusion and forge democratic principles." Gender is one of the tenets of development therefore mainstreaming gender in universities is fundamental to matters that require to be addressed urgently, as it goes beyond the effecting of social justice and equity. Gender mainstreaming processes are contested; the contestation is evidenced by the reluctance to discard sectional or special projects for women and to make space for them in everyday operations, positions and situations where policies, priorities and executive decisions are made. The gender debate in universities cannot be isolated from the broader political, social, cultural and economic context. Locating the gender debate in universities within this context helps to move towards a more systematic approach and broader understanding of the dynamics at play in historical space and time. In line with this view, it is important to locate this gender debate as embedded, in the first instance, to pre and post independent Zimbabwe whilst concurrently considering the influence of socio-economic and political variables.

A university is culturally defined, and reflects and replicates the values of those who set it up (in the case of ZOU, the Government of Zimbabwe). Universities are by tradition gendered. Every institution normally has four components; strategy, structure, systems and culture () as explained below;

- Strategy includes an organization's vision, mission, goals and how it intends to achieve them.
- Structure refers to its divisions, allocation of tasks, and positions of authority and responsibilities, and the relationships between its members.
- Systems constitute the rules, regulations, policies that govern the operations of the institution.
- Culture is the shared values, opinions and norms of its members as determined by the conventions and unwritten rules of the organization, its norms of cooperation and conflict, mores and its channels for exerting influence. Gender mainstreaming would imply engendering each of these organizational aspects and levels.

3 TRENDS IN UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP IN ZIMBABWE

A random selection of Zimbabwean universities reveals the following trends in top management structures;

- ❖ The Chancellor of all State Universities, the President of Zimbabwe is male
- ❖ Zimbabwe Council of Higher Education (ZIMCHE), the regulatory body of Higher Education in Zimbabwe is headed by a male
- ❖ University of Zimbabwe (UZ), the oldest university in the country, the Vice Chancellor (VC) is male, one female Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC), the other PVC is male
- ❖ At Midlands State University (MSU) the Vice-Chancellor is male; the same applies to his two PVCs.
- ❖ At National University of Science and Technology (NUST) the VC is male; the same applies to his PVC.
- ❖ At Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT) VC is male and PVC is male
- ❖ The executive management of Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) has one woman out of seven, though the VC is female
- ❖ Women's University in Zimbabwe (WUA) is headed by a female VC though the PVC is male

In most universities Zimbabwe, women are concentrated at the lower end of the institutional hierarchy. In 2014 at ZOU there are no women full professors but only two associate professors. This picture points to the poor ratio of women to men in management and operations of the universities in Zimbabwe and the same scenario is evident especially in science and technology where very few women are represented. It becomes essential to ask questions; what could have contributed to this scenario? Don't we have enough highly educated women who can assume leadership positions? Are universities justified

in criticising structures that perpetuate oppression when they are themselves promoting the same inequalities? Is gender equality less important than other forms of equality? How can universities offer contemporary solutions through research when their structures are still antediluvian? Regardless of the existence of enabling well crafted policies gender disparities persist in most universities in Zimbabwe and beyond. The situation is a clear manifestation of the gap that exists between policy formulation and implementation. This scenario shows that women are not entering postgraduate programmes at the same rate that they enter undergraduate programmes in Zimbabwe. For that reason it will be a canard to expect women to be comparatively represented on university teaching, research programmes and management structures. The ratio of women in management is very small compared to that of men.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of gender mainstreaming is premised through an analysis the Moser Framework

4.1 MOSER FRAMEWORK

The Moser Framework is based on concepts of gender roles and gender needs as well as policy approaches to gender and development planning [5]. The framework aims to set up gender planning in its own right. Gender planning aims to emancipate women from their subordination, leading to their achievement of equality, equity and empowerment. However, this varies with context, and is dependent on the degree to which women are subordinated in status to men [6]. The framework questions assumptions that gender planning is a purely technical task and views it as distinct from traditional planning methods. Instead, it views gender planning as both political and technical in nature, assumes conflict in planning process, involves transformatory processes and characterizes planning as debate [6]. The Moser Framework has 4 categories of analysis. These are the Triple Role Framework, Practical and Strategic gender needs, Disaggregation of control of resources and decision making within the household and distinguishing between Women in Development (WID) / Gender and Development (GAD) policy approaches. The framework makes work visible and valuable through the concept of triple roles and categorises policy approaches. Furthermore, the framework moves beyond technical elements of planning to recognize socio-economic and political dimensions in gender mainstreaming. The Moser framework assumes conflict of interest in the planning process and recognizes the transformative potential of gender planning. The framework conceptualizes planning as aiming to challenge unequal gender relations and support women's empowerment [6]. However, the idea of gender roles obscures the notion of gender relationships and can give false impressions of natural order and equality. The Moser Framework however ignores factors such as class, race and ethnicity in its approach. Moreover, the framework is static; it does not examine change over time as a variable. Potentially, policy approaches which could seem to be mutually exclusive may overlap in practice. The shift in focus from WID to GAD is clearly articulated in the feminist political ecology theory. This theory carries with it assumptions that gender differentiation can be traced to societal division of labour, property rights and power relations, whether these are gendered, physical, racial, class-based, or cultural [7] The feminist political approach can be used to analyse power dynamics that influence decision making processes at the Zimbabwe Open University. This is the conceptual approach that underpinned this study.

5 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The qualitative research methodology formed the basis of this study, although a quantitative research design was also employed. The two approaches are complementary, providing different perspectives and answering different specific questions within any one broad area [8]. In addition, qualitative research is inherently multi-method in design [9] and [10] and this enabled use of triangulation to validate data gathered through extensive documentary reviews, interviews with key selected stakeholders, representative of students, academic and administrative staff and top-decision makers and implementers were also conducted. In the same respect, [8] state that qualitative research may help to understand the findings of quantitative research. In this way, the researcher endeavoured to offset the potential biases associated with quantitative research, mainly, such as being subject to researcher bias [8]. Fundamental to this study is the use of a case study. Detailed empirical research is needed in a specific geographical context to understand the dynamics of gender mainstreaming. The approach is an efficient way of capturing context specific details. A case study is "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" and is particularly suitable for answering the 'how' and 'why' questions [11] for instance; How does Gender Mainstreaming contribute to development? A case study is also defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context and relies on multiple sources of data [12]

6 GENDER MAINSTREAMING POLICY AT ZOU AND EXISTING ACTIVITIES TO INITIATE AND STRENGTHEN IT

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for men and women of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes in all areas at all levels [1]. It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is reduced. The rationale for gender mainstreaming and gender equality policy perspective at the ZOU is twofold; a human rights perspective to ensure that women and men have equal access and control over recognising the different interests, roles and responsibilities and needs of women and men in order to meet and support these, with the aim to achieve an effective and sustainable development [13].

Most stakeholders (80%) at the ZOU seem aware of the need for gender equity and equality but reality on the ground proves otherwise. Women are grossly under-represented as students, lecturers and administrators. Less than forty per cent of the university enrolment of about 5 000 students is female as at June 2014. The University does not have a clear-cut gender-mainstreaming policy. It has affirmative action policies; but these appear to be mere policy frameworks which do not have any significant bearing in reality, for example students are recruited on the strength of their qualifications rather than anything else. There are no gender equity policies with reference to staff recruitment, retention and promotion, as well as staff development policies. Of course, many ZOU adverts for staff recruitment end with the familiar phrases; Women candidates are especially encouraged to apply or ZOU is an equal opportunity employer. Such implied gender sensitivity does not tally with specific goals within the university itself.

Deliberate long-term efforts should be enacted to empower women in the academe. However, universities at times face the invidious position of not having an ample base from which they can select competent women as either staff or students. The lower education system still has a gender related bottleneck system, whereby women's representation shrinks as the education hierarchy proceeds especially in the developing world, so much so that, by the time of entry into universities women will be grossly underrepresented. Out of 16 universities in Zimbabwe, only the Zimbabwe Open University and the Women's University in Africa (WUA) have female vice chancellors, this is inconsistent with the gender policy advocated for by both the Ministries of Gender and that of Higher Education, science and technological development. At the ZOU less than half the executive posts are occupied by women, for example of the five executive dean posts only one is occupied by a female. Of these 5 three are professors and two are PhD holders (including the female Dean). Of the six state universities in the country ZOU is the only one that has a female vice- chancellor.

The positions of Manager, Academic Registry and Director, Academic, Registry are all occupied by females. The Director Works Department is also headed by a female. In a University set up these are very influential posts. Positions below the level of the Dean are predominantly occupied by men, in 2011 out of a staff complement of 851, 39% were female and females made up 46% of the total enrolment. The 2009 graduating cohort saw 36% females graduating out of 1311. The regional centres found in each of the country's ten geo-political provinces are mainly managed by men (80%). This is so despite the fact that the majority of these Regional Directors are holders of Master of Education Degrees Programmes and they came from the education sector where there are a significant number of women as teachers. This explains that the education sector in Zimbabwe is mainly controlled by men. Of the three departments under the Faculty of Science and Technology, which is headed by a male dean, two chairpersons position are occupied by males. This may imply that a few women specialised in the sciences both at high school and university and hence the need for gender mainstreaming at all levels of education at ZOU and Zimbabwe in general. There is therefore the need to bring in science bridging courses to cater for both female and male students who fail to register for first time so that they prepare for science education at University. In the same vein the ZOU can expand its staff development programmes so that those Lecturers with a Masters Degree are encouraged to pursue PhD Studies with financial assistance from the university. The institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming policies and strategies has to be done at different levels in the ZOU that include the following:

- Council
- Senate
- Academic Bodies
- Administrative Bodies
- Faculties
- Departments
- Teaching ,Curriculum and Textbooks
- Research and Development
- Internships

- Alumni
- Student Bodies
- Classroom Facilities.

7 GENDER BUDGETING

An institutions commitment to social justice is seen by its allocation of budgetary resources for women. Often governments and institutions are very quick to tick on the checklist that they have signed and ratified international instruments and put policies and laws in place that promote social justice for women, but they seldom match this with the necessary budgetary allocations that actually translate the signature into the transformation of women's lives. This transcends from the Government to the ZOU. This is the reason why women's rights activists have over the years spent significant amounts of energy advocating for gender budgeting, as a model and tool that ensures effective and responsive public policies for women. The overall goal of gender budgeting is to reduce gender inequalities and to promote gender-sensitive development policies for poverty reduction and improvement of the welfare of women and men, boys and girls through the national budget – to achieve gender-sensitive budget that address the needs of all people equitably, while taking into consideration the special needs of people with disabilities, the youth and the elderly [1].

Mainstreaming gender into the university curriculum and the creation of the Gender Mainstreaming Department within the Zimbabwe Open University set up will help towards the realisation of a fully gender mainstreamed university. Changing the organisational culture which is still male dominated and Gender budgeting need to be taken into serious consideration towards the realisation of this endeavour. There is also the need to identify areas requiring more data to highlight important gender disparities. The university system should take gender issues as an integral part of all its dialogue, discussions, programming and planning process in all quarterly and annual reviews. An ongoing process of dialogue and consultation on gender issues integration should be established with all relevant stakeholders that include other Universities in the country and abroad, Government and civil society.

8 LACK OF GENDER DISAGGREGATED DATA

Enrolment figures are fairly covered in most universities including ZOU however the following areas need more attention: Gender imbalance at admissions i.e. enrolments by year and disipline, availability of data will make it easier to make appropriate interventions e.g. affirmative policy whereby because of inherent women disadvantages those with lower qualifications may be admitted. All ZOU statistics should be disaggregated by sex (gender disaggregated data) and should fully capture the following to be more comprehensive and illustrative;

- Information on place of origin , ethnicity etc
- Indicators of absenteeism failure to do assignments etc
- Achievement level both men and women
- Completion rates
- Repetition rates
- Leadership role in student affairs
- Marital status
- Financial situation
- Dropout rates and reasons for dropping e.g. marital problems , there is very little or no data for this
- Sexual harassments reports this data needs collation

9 GENDER AUDITING IN ZOU

Gender auditing is a process to understand the situations of women relative to those of men in a given institution; areas of focus may include on the gender gaps in enrolment, retention and achievement by men and women [1]. A gender audit will enable ZOU to decide and secure commitment of top management to change towards greater gender equality so as provide gender training to human resources practitioners and staff. This done so that policies enacted are sensitive and fair to women and men's needs at work. The human resources department needs to sponsor training for and hire more women at higher levels of academic management and administrative grades in ZOU. In addition there is need to produce guidelines on gender-sensitive interviewing and assessment of applicants. Equal weighting should be given to different areas of academic excellence (research, teaching and community service) so that both men and women can excel in areas of their choice or in areas where they are very good at. Currently more emphasis is put on research. Provision of child care and

recreational facilities to keep staff motivated and focussed helps in developing collegial networks necessary for career advancement. ZOU does not have its own facilities, rentals could be paid to identified institutions so that its staff will utilise these facilities. At present these are not there, this include basic facilities such as staff canteen.

10 ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN GENDER-SENSITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Human resource development plays a key role in ensuring gender-sensitive development in the ZOU in terms of management. The male dominated management systems are self – perpetuating, there is need for ZOU to bring in gender balance in recruitment and promotions; in the same vein there is need to ensure that there is gender balance in the membership of the promotions committee. Planning and implementation of its staff development programme should be gender-sensitive through provision of equal opportunities for staff development for men and women; the current system is silent on this issue. In ZOU men easily go on contact and sabbatical leave because men may be able to go for longer periods without family responsibilities: proper policies and adjustments that take into account the varying gendered responsibilities for families and households could be taken on board so that women find it easy to take the aforementioned leaves. An effective Human Resources department should take the following into consideration when designing their policies. There is need for human resources to provide a variety of staff development opportunities which take into account gendered responsibilities for families and households’, this can be done through sensitised funding and training partners to the differing needs of men and women in higher education so that they too, can develop and fund appropriate programmes that can be exploited by women and men. In the same vein set targets for reaching gender parity in staff and students at various levels should be set. There is need for complete revamp of the hr through alteration of recruitment criteria and procedures. All departments in ZOU need restructuring to mainstream gender.

11 ISSUES THAT GENDER-SENSITIVE HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PRACTICES SHOULD COVER

-  Job access, employment to academic and support posts and staff development.
-  Terms and conditions of service for men and women in the same jobs.
-  Maternity and paternity benefits
-  Parental, duty, ordinary, sick and compassionate leave for men and women.
-  Medical aid benefits for men, women and their dependents.
-  Child-care on and off campus and the responsibilities of men and women.
-  Contact and sabbatical leave for men and women.
-  Pensions and terminal benefits.
-  Ordinary duties in all grades and their demands on men and women.
-  Grading and promotion for men and women.

Source: [14]

With a properly constituted human resources department that is gender sensitive and with some kind of related training, as well as commitment by senior management ZOU has more strengths and opportunities in gender mainstreaming as compared to weaknesses and threats as detailed in the table below.

12 (STRENGTH, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS) SWOT ANALYSIS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING AT THE ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>High rate of women's enrolment.-decentralised university education</p> <p>Good participation by other stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Gender & Ministry of Higher Education.)</p> <p>Female VC who can be a role model to all employees</p> <p>Existence of centre for research</p> <p>Technical expertise in gender mainstreaming is available /can be hired</p> <p>Experience in module writing , that of gender mainstreaming can easily be written</p> <p>The university admits the most vulnerable and marginalized men and women</p> <p>Equal opportunity for women and men to access university education.</p> <p>High literacy level in the country</p> <p>Infrastructure is available to serve all</p>	<p>Insufficient budgetary allocation</p> <p>Lack of training on gender issues</p> <p>Cultural values: women tend to have limited educational opportunities</p> <p>Lack of Gender Mainstreaming Office /Department</p> <p>Limited financial resources</p> <p>Curricula which is not gender sensitive</p> <p>Irrelevant curricula</p> <p>Weak partnership with the private sector</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Further educational opportunities</p> <p>Strengthen the linkage with the gender mainstreaming efforts coordinated by the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development and that of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development</p> <p>Support the development of cost-saving technologies</p> <p>Enhanced employment opportunities</p> <p>Self actualisation of the marginalised</p> <p>Existence of ZOU in Zimbabwe's 10 geo -political regions.</p> <p>An educated workforce willing to learn</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>The problem of the sustainability of women's empowerment, given the relatively short period of time the university has existed</p> <p>Lack of training</p> <p>Programme affected by HIV/AIDS and other diseases</p> <p>Enrolment affected by the displacement of people due to brain drain and land reform</p> <p>Old habits that are difficult to shelve</p>

13 CONCLUSION

The study findings seems to confirm the Moser Frame work, there are some posts within the University set up that are appointed taking into consideration the political orientation of an individual, this mainly include the post of VC and those of PVCs and other senior management such as the registrar, bursar, librarian and IT Director . This is very pertinent especially if one takes into consideration the fact that the President is the Chancellor of all State Universities of which ZOU is one. In order to achieve gender mainstreaming at the ZOU there are quite a number of requirements that have to be met and these include adequate expertise on gender issues in the management, coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation system. The university has an inadequate cohort of female science students to draw on from secondary students to achieve the university's target of 50/50 female/ male student ratio. ZOU can copy from two different university scenarios. WUA has a gender policy premised on goals, principles, gender analysis, gender equality, strategies, and performance assessment ratified by senior management and council. Gender issues are directly under the faculty of social sciences and gender. WUA has a quota of 80% women students as guided by its vision and mission.

Elsewhere, in 2002, Makerere University, Uganda decided to expand the gender mainstreaming programme to all faculties and departments through the creation of the Gender Mainstreaming Division under the Registrar's Office [16]. The aim of the department, initially established in 1991 is to coordinate gender mainstreaming throughout the university and to; promote a gender-friendly, inclusive and secure environment , ensure that gender balance in student enrolment and

performance is improved, advocate for increased recruitment, promotion and retention of female staff, work for the engendering of the University curriculum, make provision for the training of a critical mass of staff in gender analysis skills promote and advocate for the integration of gender in research, promote the integration of gender perspectives in the university outreach programme, advocate and promote increased participation of women in decision-making, ensure that university policy on women's access to benefits, allowances and other entitlements is streamlined, regularized and wholly implemented and to promote the use of gender sensitive language in all forms of communication.

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