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Engela Pretorius, Suzanne de Villiers Human, Rita Niemann, Elsabé Klinck & Heinrich Alt

Fighting from within: gender equity at the University of the Free State

Summary

This study sets out to assess the extent to which gender equity has been mainstreamed at the University of the Free State (UFS). The external environment is briefly discussed in terms of the policy framework within which the institution operates. This is followed by a gender analysis of the institution. It is first compared with other universities. Data are then presented in respect of the position of women academics at the institution, as well as of their experience of and reaction to the organisational culture. Several employment barriers are identified and the relevant legal implications of the Employment Equity Act are indicated.

Stryd van binne: geslagsgelykberegtiging aan die Universiteit van die Vrystaat

Die ondersoek poog om vas te stel hoe geslagsgelykberegtiging in die hoofstroomaktiwiteite van die Universiteit van die Vrystaat (UV) geïntegreer word. Die eksterne omgewing word kortliks bespreek in terme van die beleidsraamwerk waarbinne die instelling funksioneer, gevolg deur 'n gender-analise van die instelling. Eerstens word dit met ander universiteite in die land vergelyk. Data word dan voorgehou oor die posisie van vroue-akademici aan die UV, asook oor hul ervaring van en reaksie op die organisasiekultuur. Verskeie werkplekhindernisse word geïdentifiseer en die wetlike implikasies in terme van die Wet op Billike Indiensneming word aangedui.

Prof E Pretorius, Dept of Sociology; Dr E S de Villiers Human, Dept of History of Art; Dr S M Niemann, Dept of Comparative Education and Education Management; Ms E Klinck, Dept of Constitutional Law and Philosophy of Law, & Dr H Alt, Strategic Services, University of the Free State, P O Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300; E-mail: pretore.hum@mail.uovs.ac.za; humane@hum.uovs.ac.za; niemannr @opv.uovs.ac.za; Elsabek@samedical.org & fgha@rs.uovs.ac.za

> The truth is, while we are talking the talk of gender equality, we are still not walking the walk (Joyce Seroke, chairperson of the Commission on Gender Equality, April 1999).

More than a hundred years ago, in 1885, the first women were enrolled at a South African university — Victoria College (now the University of Stellenbosch). The first woman student to attend Rhodes University enrolled in 1904, while the University College of Johannesburg (now the University of the Witwatersrand) accepted eight women students in 1917. One of these, Esther Taylor, was to become the first woman lecturer at this institution (Branca 1986). The University of the Free State (UFS), which was established in 1904, had four male students during that first year, but the eleven who enrolled in 1905 were joined by two women, both of them staff members of the Eunice Girls' School. In the following year, three of the 26 students were women. The first Students' Council, established in 1909, was all male, but within two years women students were granted representation. A photograph of the teaching staff and students, taken during 1906, also indicates that one of the ten teaching staff was a woman, namely the wife of the first vice-chancellor, Prof Johannes Brill (Uys 1950: 37). Despite the fact that women thus formed part of this institution from the outset, both as students and as lecturers, it would take sixty-three years to produce its first woman professor in 1969. It comes as no surprise that she was in an all-female department: Nursing.

More than a century after women entered the academic sphere in South Africa their presence has increased. Yet they still form a minority in the most senior positions. Thirty years after the first woman reached the position of professor at UFS, the ranks of women professors have swelled to a mere eight — 8% of the total number of professors. Even in the most recent years the rate of progress has been slow: in 1994 there were six women professors, and that number remained unchanged for eight years.

In general, a similar situation obtains in the entire South African tertiary education sector, as will be demonstrated in paragraph 2.1, which suggests that there are real barriers to women's upward mobility. This is also a universal phenomenon. Statistics on the position of women at British universities reveal that although nearly half (47%)

of academic-related staff are women, just 13% of the women have reached the more senior Grades 4-6, compared with 31% of men (Universities and Colleges Employers Association 1999: 4). At American universities, although women constitute 43% of all college and university professors, only 16% of full professors (the top rank) are women, while 48% are instructors, in poorly paid temporary positions providing fewer job benefits and rewards (Andersen 1997: 117). Lindsey (1997: 261) also identified this phenomenon — which has come to be called the "glass ceiling" — in the elite ranks of some of the most powerful companies. Here, regardless of legal provisions, an "old-style" gender bias emerges which effectively thwarts women's progress up the corporate ladder. From the perspectives of gender and race, the glass ceiling phenomenon manifests itself throughout South Africa. In 1997 35% of all employed women and 45% of employed African women were in what are called "elementary" occupations requiring very little skill. Only 19% of all men and 22% of African men were in such poorly-paid occupations. Only 4% of all women and 2% of African women were managers, compared with 8% of all men and 4% of African men (Budlender 1999).

This study aims to assess the headway that has been made in terms of gender mainstreaming at this University. According to the UN, mainstreaming involves the process of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making both women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres in order that women and men should benefit equally and that inequality should not be perpetuated. The ultimate goal of this mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (UN 1997). With a view to assessing gender mainstreaming at this institution, the first part of the study contextualises the institution in terms of the external environment, the policy framework within which it operates. The study then critically analyses the internal environment, explicating this by means of a gender analysis.

1. The external environment of the UFS: policy framework

Gender equality is a major focus within post-apartheid South Africa and the government has established various mechanisms to ensure and facilitate gender equality, as have organisations in the private sector and in civil society. The framework for this process of transformation is supplied by the principles enshrined in the Constitution, by the development of a national machinery and appropriate labour legislation, as well as by the ratification of certain international conventions, for instance the Beijing Platform for Action, Beijing+5 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

1.1 The Constitution

The Constitution declares that South African society is founded on certain values, such as non-sexism (section 1[b]). Section 9 states explicitly that neither the state nor other bodies may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on grounds including gender. It also makes provision for redress and for future equality by stating that affirmative action programmes are to be introduced on behalf of previously disadvantaged groups.[1] However, the struggle for equality does not end with the Constitution. Enshrined constitutional rights are rendered enforceable by being incorporated into laws and policies. Before discussing such South African laws and policies, it is important to consider the standards adopted by the international community to address gender inequality. The most significant of these is the United Nations Convention — CEDAW.

1.2 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW is a United Nations Convention which came into force in 1981. It is the most powerful bill of rights for women worldwide, and has created an international standard against which the treatment of women can be measured in all spheres of life — including

1 According to the Employment Equity Act (No 55/1998) the designated groups are blacks, women and people with disabilities.

the educational, civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres. In December 1995 South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on CEDAW. Article 11 of this Convention deals with employment. It states that the state must remove discrimination against women in work so that women enjoy equal rights in the workplace. These include, among others, the right to

> the same employment opportunities, including the right to be judged by the same criteria as men, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service (UN, Division for the Advancement of Women 1979).

1.3 National gender machinery

The process of advancing the ideals contained in the Constitution is vested in the national and provincial machinery for the promotion of gender equality. The Office on the Status of Women (OSW) and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) are central to the scheme. Gender desks have also been established in most government departments.

1.4 Labour legislation

Labour law regulation in South Africa has always been political. Its policies were previously solidly embedded in apartheid. During that time doctrinal arguments were made by the government of the day in defence of race and gender discrimination as foundations of policy. The inequalities of the past have been addressed by the Constitution and new legislation has been introduced to deal with inequality in the workplace, for example, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (No 75 of 1997), the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998), and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No 4 of 2000).

- The Employment Equity Act (No 55, RSA 1998)

The purpose of this Act is to give effect to sections 9(2) and 9(4) of the Constitution. It promulgates regulations on affirmative action and discrimination in the workplace aimed at establishing equal opportunities for all employees and job applicants. More specifically, employers must

- identify and eliminate employment barriers;
- grant equal development opportunities to all employees;
- ensure that all employees are treated with respect;
- ensure equal representation of all people at the various levels, and
- secure the positions held by people belonging to designated groups.

An important aspect of the Employment Equity Act is that while correcting the imbalances of the past, it simultaneously addresses the issues of skills development and resource utilisation (Pieterse 1998: 39).

- The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No 4, RSA 2000a)

This act prohibits unfair discrimination in all spheres of society and includes a special section dealing with particular manifestations in relation to gender, for example discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy. It provides a simpler and less formal enforcement mechanism. One of its subsections also places a duty on all citizens, called the "social commitment to the promotion of equality".

1.5 Policies pertaining to equality in education and training

- The Education White Paper 3 (RSA 1997)

In the spirit of the Constitution, section 1.18 of this document alludes to "a critical identification of existing inequalities" and states that "transformation with a view [to] redress" should take place. According to this document, "[S]uch transformation involves not only abolishing all existing forms of unjust differentiation, but also measures of empowerment" (section 1.18). It specifically identifies the following implications for educational institutions:

- imbalances between the sexes must be identified and rectified (section 3.43);
- strategies for increasing the representation of women in professional leadership and management positions must be proposed (section 3.43), and

- the entire education system must be liberated from sexism, sexual harassment and violence (section 3.44).

- The National Plan for Higher Education (RSA 2001)

Apart from critical aspects such as institutional mergers, a new funding formula for research and a shift to the sciences, this document also encompasses major equity drives which will financially penalise institutions which fail to improve access for the designated groups. Thus redress forms a very important aspect of this Plan. One strategic objective (section 3) is "[t]o ensure that the student and staff profiles progressively reflect the demographic realities of South African society". Increasing "the representation of blacks and women in academic and administrative positions, especially at senior level" is stipulated as a priority (RSA 2001)

2. The internal environment: gender analysis of the UFS

The theoretical point of departure for this analysis of the internal environment of the UFS is feminist theory. From this vantage point, the first basic question is: "And what about the women?" (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley 1992: 448). In the context of the UFS this question translates into the following research questions:

- How does the position of academic women at the UFS compare nationally?
- What employment barriers do women experience, particularly in terms of promotion?
- Where are academic women situated in the organisational hierarchy?
- How do women experience and react to the organisational culture?

This study attempts to move beyond description to the level of explanation by finding answers to a second basic question emanating from feminist theory, namely "Why then is all this as it is?" (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley 1992: 449).

This research was considered important in that it could benefit both the organisation as a whole and the category of women academics which forms the focus of the study in various ways:

- Knowledge of and insight into women's perceptions and experiences of employment barriers could impact on the organisational culture in terms of which men seem to be favoured for promotion. The information gained could be used in gender sensitisation initiatives.
- The findings of this study could also have an effect on the Employment Equity Policy of the organisation. A better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the designated group could assist in finding means of redressing and advancing towards employment equity and empowerment.
- Above all, the information gained could benefit those currently experiencing the glass ceiling.

2.1 Comparison of UFS with other universities

The first research question addressed by this study concerns the position of women academics at UFS in relation to those at other (public) universities. A documentary analysis of the personnel situation across all faculties indicated that there are huge discrepancies in terms of gender. This problem is not unique to the UFS. Professor Kadar Asmal, Minister of Education, has stated that "gender inequalities [...] continue to permeate our educational system" and added that "unless significant progress is made in higher education institutions to redress the dearth of women leadership, I will have little option but to consider the imposition of quotas" (Asmal 2000). This state of affairs is corroborated by the latest Annual Report of the Council on Higher Education (CHE 2000/2001): "Women academics were uniformly under-represented at around a third of the total at all institutional types". This position is illustrated in Table 1.

From this table it is apparent that women constitute about one-third of all academic staff (36% in 1999) at South African universities. Moreover, most women academics occupy the lower echelons of the hierarchy: 64.44% are found in the lowest two ranks.

An analysis of the situation in respect of academic personnel at the UFS indicates similar discrepancies in terms of gender. This is illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 1: South African universities: academic staff by rank and gender, 1994 and 1999

	Professor		Associate professor		Senior lecturer		Lecturer		Junior lecturer		Total	
	1994	1999	1994	1999	1994	1999	1994	1999	1994	1999	1994	1999
Women	186	231	246	331	1064	1303	2366	2718	480	662	4342	5245
Men	2139	1869	1120	1108	2736	2530	2891	2945	392	611	9227	9324
Total	2325	2100	1366	1439	3800	3833	5257	5663	872	1273	13569	14569
% Women	8	11	18	23	28	34	45	48	55	52	32	36

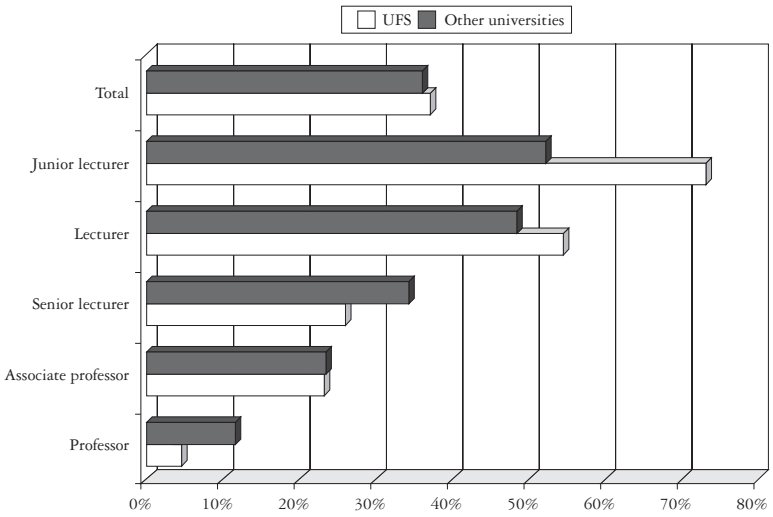
Source: CHE 2000/2001

Table 2: University of the Free State: academic staff by rank and gender, 1994 and 1999

	Professor		Associate professor		Senior lecturer		Lecturer		Junior lecturer		Total	
	1994	1999	1994	1999	1994	1999	1994	1999	1994	1999	1994	1999
Women	6	6	18	17	41	43	107	135	40	70	212	271
Men	125	135	67	56	133	122	113	117	25	26	463	456
Total	131	141	85	73	174	165	220	252	65	96	675	727
% Women	4.58	4.26	21.18	23.29	23.56	26.06	48.64	53.57	61.54	72.92	31.41	37.28

Source: UFS 2002

Figure 1: Female academic staff by rank, at the UFS and other universities



Source: CHE 2000/2001

From Table 2 and Figure 1 it is clear that the UFS compares favourably with the national average, with virtually the same number of male and female academics. However, it is apparent that at the UFS more women academics occupy the lowest two levels (75.65% of all women academics, compared with the national average of 64.44%). Consequently, fewer women occupy the top three ranks (24.35% compared with the national average of 35.56%). This is due, in particular, to the very obvious discrepancy in the top ranking: the national average for professors is virtually three times higher than that at the UFS. The percentage change shown in Table 3 indicates why the UFS is lagging behind. While there was a national increase in the number of women at every level during 1994 and 1999, averaging 20.80%, there was very little change in the top three categories at the UFS: no change in the number of women professors during the five-year period and approximately 5% increase at the levels of associate professor and senior lecturer. By contrast there was an increase

of 75% in the number of women at the level of junior lecturer at the UFS, which was double the national growth at that level (37.92%).

2.2 Case study: gender representation in the Faculty of the Humanities

In order to address the research questions pertaining to women's situation in the organisational hierarchy, how they experience the organisational culture, what constitute employment barriers and whether there had been any recent changes in their positions, it was decided to do a case study of one Faculty, namely that of the Humanities. This method would provide the researchers with a detailed analysis of the complexities of the situation. The feminist methodology applied by the authors (all but one members of the Faculty of the Humanities)[2] uses reflexivity and, in particular, consciousness-raising. Thus the exposure of previously hidden phenomena as contradictions led to academic insight and resulted in an intellectual product (this study). The reflexivity of the study's feminist methodology is also evident in its emphasis on collaboration between women researchers. Finally, the research exemplifies the tendency of the feminist approach to research to use the situation-at-hand (cf Fonow & Cook 1991), since the first three authors formed the first Equity Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities (2000). Their gender analysis, along with several reports to the Faculty Board, forms the basis of this article.

The first data-collecting instrument was a documentary analysis undertaken with a view to providing an exposition of the gender representation within the Faculty.[3] In order to ascertain whether there had been any recent changes, the gender representation within the Faculty of the Humanities was compared before and after the promotions announced during 2001 to take effect in 2002.

The permanent academic staff complement within the Faculty in 1999 is indicated in Table 4 and Figure 2. In 1999 there were 21 male professors (23.33%) and 13 male associate professors (14.44%)

2 Elsabé Klinck is a former lecturer in the Faculty of Law, UFS.

3 For the purposes of this article, only the information pertaining to academic women (N=21) was used.

Table 3: Percentage change in the gender representation of academic staff at the UFS and other universities, 1994-1999

Category	UFS				Other universities			
	Number		Change		Number		Change	
	1994	1999	Number	%	1994	1999	Number	%
Professor	6	6	0	0	186	231	+45	+24.19
Associate professor	18	17	-1	-5.5	246	331	+85	+34.55
Senior lecturer	41	43	+2	+4.9	1064	1303	+239	+22.46
Lecturer	107	135	+28	+26.2	2366	2718	352	+14.88
Junior lecturer	40	70	+30	+75	480	662	182	+37.92

Sources: UFS 2002

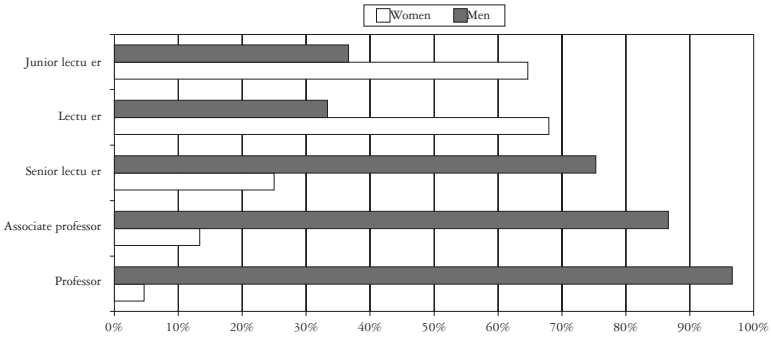
Table 4: Gender representation in the Faculty of Humanities by rank, 1999

	Prof	%	Ass Prof	%	Snr Lect	%	Lect	%	Jnr Lect	%	Total	%
Men	21	23.33	13	14.44	30	33.33	21	23.33	5	5.56	90	57.69
Women	1	1.52	2	3.03	10	15.15	44	66.67	9	13.64	66	42.31
Total	22		15		40		65		14		156	
% Women	4.55		13.33		25		67.69		64.29		42.31	

Source: UFS 2000

as opposed to only one female professor (1.52%) and two female associate professors (3.03%). At the level of senior lecturer there were also more men than women: 30 (33.33%) as opposed to 10 women (15.15%). Conversely, 53 of the 66 women (80,30%) occupied the lowest two levels, as opposed to only 26 of the 90 men (28,89%).

Figure 2: Gender representation in the Faculty of the Humanities by rank, 1999



Source: UFS 2000

To address the research question as to whether there had been any recent changes in the position of women in the Faculty and thus to gauge whether any headway has been made in this regard, certain aspects of the position of women in the Faculty before and after the promotions of 2001 were compared.

The previous five years had been characterised by institutional reorganisation. One of the major restructuring endeavours was the consolidation of three faculties — Social Sciences, Arts and Philosophy, and Education — into the single Faculty of the Humanities. Large-scale rationalisation took place, and no promotions were possible for five to eight years. In 2001, due to the success of a massive turnaround strategy, money became available for promotions.

Due to rationalisation, the Faculty had lost 31 members by 2001 and numbered 125. However, rationalisation had not substantially changed the relative position of women and men. Table 4 reflects the overall position of women in the Faculty after the process of rationalisation. Since 1999, the percentage of women in permanent positions has

Table 5: Permanent academic staff of the Faculty of the Humanities by level and gender, 2001 (before and after promotions)

	Professor				Associate professor				Senior lecturer				Lecturer				Junior lecturer				Total			
	Before		After		Before		After		Before		After		Before		After		Before		After		Before		After	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Men	22	29.3	27	36	12	16	11	14.7	22	29.3	20	26.7	14	18.7	14	18.7	5	6.7	3	4	75	60	75	59
Women	1	2	1	1.9	1	2	5	9.6	11	22.2	12	23.1	33	66	32	61.5	4	8	2	3.9	50	40	52	41

Source: UFS 2000 & 2001

decreased by 1.37%, which proves that rationalisation was detrimental to women. In 1999 women comprised 42.3% of the staff and men 57.7%. At 41% the present ratio of women to men is even lower, which means that no headway has been made.

When the position of women at the various levels before and after the promotions is scrutinised more closely, it is clear that the only significant gains for women occurred at the level of associate professor (7.6%). The most glaring discrepancy is still at the level of professor, where men outnumber women by 96.4% to 3.6% and where more than a third of all men (36%) are to be found compared with only 1.9% of the women. In fact, only 4% of the female component occupies the two most senior positions as opposed to nearly half (45.3%) of all men. As was the case in 1999, most of the women — 65.4% as opposed to 22.67% of the men — remain in the lowest two positions.

2.2.1 Employment barriers experienced by women in the Faculty of the Humanities

From the documentary analysis it was clear that there were certain impediments to the advancement of women academics through the hierarchy. In order to determine the possible employment barriers, two surveys were conducted among Faculty staff by the Employment Equity Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities, the first in 1999 and the second in 2001.

In the first survey questionnaires were distributed to every woman in the Faculty (both academic and support staff). 38 were returned, representing a response rate of 23%.[4] Anecdotal evidence suggests that some women were intimidated, which may have prevented them from completing the questionnaire.

To establish to what extent the respondents in the survey were informed about the labour legislation pertaining to equity, they were asked about their knowledge of two Acts, namely the Employment Equity Act (No 55/1998) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No 4/2000). 38.10% responded

4 Although the authors have, for the purposes of this article, deliberately compartmentalised the work and family spheres and focused only on the working environment, they are well aware of the fact that stress can also result from attempts to balance the demands of the two spheres.

negatively in respect of the first Act and 42.86% in respect of the second Act.

2.2.2 The effect of the working environment on women[5]

To obtain an indication of the possible effects of the working environment on women, respondents were asked to indicate whether they suffered from symptoms pertaining to stress, health problems, emotional problems or depression. 86% of the respondents indicated that they experienced some degree of stress. Because of the fact that unhappiness about one's job is regarded as a risk factor for poor health (Verbrugge 1993: 190), respondents were asked a question in this regard. Nearly half (47.62%) of the respondents indicated that they experienced health problems, while 19% experienced emotional problems and 29% suffered from various degrees of depression. When asked to what they attributed this, 19.05% of those who responded to this question indicated that it was due to workload, while 38.10% ascribed it to the working environment (organisational culture). Most of the examples cited pertained to being trapped in one position for several years (lack of promotion), and a sense of unfairness (male colleagues being promoted despite what was perceived as lesser merit).

2.2.3 Gender-based, emotional and sexual harassment

The study revealed a high incidence of gender-based harassment, as well as emotional and sexual harassment. In terms of section 6(3) of the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998), as well as section 11 of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No 4 of 2000), both gender-based and sexual harassment are prohibited. Actions of exclusion and expressions such as "You women are hysterical/emotional" are defined as gender-based harassment because they exert a negative influence and are based on (perceived) gender characteristics. To treat a woman differently after she has pointed out a mistake, for example, amounts to victimisation.

The NEDLAC code of conduct provides a framework for dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace. There is currently no code dealing with gender or sex-based harassment, but sufficient guidance

5 The UFS is currently in the process of introducing a Performance Management Programme.

is provided by the definition of harassment in the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No 4 of 2000). When more subtle forms of harassment, which do not meet the stricter definitions of legislation, are pointed out as "employment barriers" (as was done in this study), sensitivity training and other pro-active measures are necessitated in terms of the Act.

Harassment can be sex- or gender-based and includes favouritism and an unpleasant ("hostile") work environment. Gender-based harassment is something with which female members of staff regularly have to contend. Women are often excluded, ignored, or humiliated by means of body language and remarks. Women are also regularly exposed to non-inclusive language (the use of the masculine form) in administrative documentation. Such events are upsetting and disturbing and result in women's experiencing their work environment as derogatory and intimidating. This has a negative effect on their self-confidence, morale and health. Responses to questionnaires confirmed women's disapproval of unsavoury jokes at their expense in mixed company, as well as of regular emotional harassment. When asked about the various kinds of harassment as stipulated by the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998), 14.29% of the respondents reported having experienced sexual harassment, 42.86% emotional harassment and 28.57% gender-based harassment. One respondent went so far as to say: "I suffered years of hell due to my previous head of department."

2.2.4 Women's strategies for coping with employment barriers

In order to determine women's experiences of employment barriers at the UFS, responses were categorised according to the model developed by Marshall (1993). This model sets out to understand the subtle and powerful processes by which organisational cultures operate and differentially affect the experiences of women. Marshall draws on the framework developed by Hall (1976) to explain why Western, male-dominated cultures are so resistant to change. Hall distinguished between high-context and low-context cultures. High-context transactions encompass pre-programmed information present in the receiver and in the setting, with only minimal information in the transmitted message. This means that communicators have to know a significant

amount about what is going on at a covert level in order to function. Low-context transactions are the opposite. Marshall transposes Hall's theory, applying it to how women experience organisational culture. According to Marshall (1999: 95), women experience organisational cultures as "high-context [and] pre-programmed with male values [...] shar[ing] much of the contexting that makes communication understandable". Although there are organisational environments in which women feel comfortable, they more generally experience their positions as precarious and marginal. Marshall (1993: 97) attributes this situation to the fact that women's attempts to "make meaning alongside men are repeatedly frustrated by the dynamics of social, institutional, and interpersonal power" and claims that such inequalities of power are the "background context to women's coping behaviour". Marshall (1999: 99-106) proceeds to identify four ways in which women can cope with the culture of their organisation. Their choices reflect varying degrees of awareness of organisational cultures as male-dominated.

- Stage A — muted

  The individual does not see the organisational culture as male-dominated. Women in this stage say they want to be treated as people rather than specifically as women. They therefore use strategies to avoid stereotyping, for instance taking care not to demonstrate emotion in public. Marshall considers such women to be in a process of denial.

  In contrast to this position, the organisational culture may be recognised as male-dominated and men as holders of the power to define social meaning. This coping pattern is stage B.

- Stage B — embattled

  This reaction entails individual consciousness-raising. Women learn a new view of the world in which they experience discrimination and even oppression. This recognition of basic inequality is often expressed in anger.

- Stage C — rebellious

  Some women feel the need to act out their anger and confront the dominant culture, for example by challenging sexist language. They challenge what others take for granted. To speak out in this

way, individuals need a robust sense of self and of their values. They may require the support of like-minded men and women to affirm their interpretations in a world which generally unconfirms or rejects them.

- Stage D — meaning-making

  Marshall calls this stage "a vision of possibility" from which few women are able to operate. Women who adopt this approach do so on the basis that the organisation allows women equal power with men in terms of shaping the culture. Such women are flexible in their perspectives, but this pattern of coping requires high levels of personal and contextual awareness.

The responses to each of the questionnaires were considered in terms of this model. It was found that the attitude commonly held towards the organisational culture was rebellious, or Stage C (38.10%). These women challenged male domination on every count and made suggestions in respect of measures aimed at changing the organisational culture. A third of the women (33.33%) displayed an embattled attitude (Stage B). These women were angry because of what they had been and still were experiencing, generally work overload without commensurate compensation.

Six of the respondents (28.57%) could be classified as muted (Stage A). They did not regard the organisational culture as male-dominated. One of these respondents attributed the fact that she had neither suffered from any symptoms, nor ever experienced any form of unfair treatment, to "a well-balanced personality". None of the respondents could be classified as fitting the last stage, meaning-making.

2.2.5 The disadvantaged position of women

In order to ascertain whether women in the Faculty of the Humanities were at a proportionally greater disadvantage than men, an analysis was made of the qualifications of Faculty staff, their supervision of postgraduates, and their research output. This *modus operandi* was followed because the UFS did not have a promotions policy as such. The existing criteria pertaining to qualifications were as follows: at least an honours degree for the position of junior lecturer, a master's for a lecturer and a doctorate for a senior lecturer.

A comparison of the number of doctorates per post level for men and women was compiled from information obtained from the UFS Department of Human Resources and is reflected in Table 6.

What is significant about the data in this table is the fact that all the women at the level of associate professor and all but one at the senior lecturer level have doctorates (91.67%). By contrast, three men without doctorates hold the position of associate professor and six without doctorates that of senior lecturer. Three of these men have additional qualifications, and one is in the arts. At the lecturer level, 37.5% of the women have PhDs, in comparison with 14.3% of the men. In terms of the criteria of the past, these 12 women and two of the men qualify for the position of senior lecturer. Although it must be acknowledged that personal and other factors enter into the equation, the lack of promotion for women with the necessary qualifications can in all probability be ascribed to two concurrent factors. The first is the process of rationalisation, mentioned above. The second is that, during the same period, women made tremendous headway in respect of obtaining PhDs. Thus, the number of women in the Faculty holding PhDs increased from 33.3% in 1999 to 55.8% in 2001.

It stands to reason that the period of downscaling was not conducive to promotion, no matter how well-deserved. Nevertheless, from a legal perspective, the UFS cannot evade its responsibility in respect of affirmative action by appealing to the cost factor. Court verdicts have repeatedly emphasised that cost cannot outweigh the need to address the question of equity, at the very least progressively.

With a view to determining in greater detail whether women in the Faculty of the Humanities had suffered proportionally greater disadvantage than men, a second survey was done in 2001. Questionnaires were distributed to every member of the academic personnel in the Faculty of the Humanities. The response rate was 94.5%. From this survey data were obtained, *inter alia*, in respect of the supervision of postgraduates and research output.

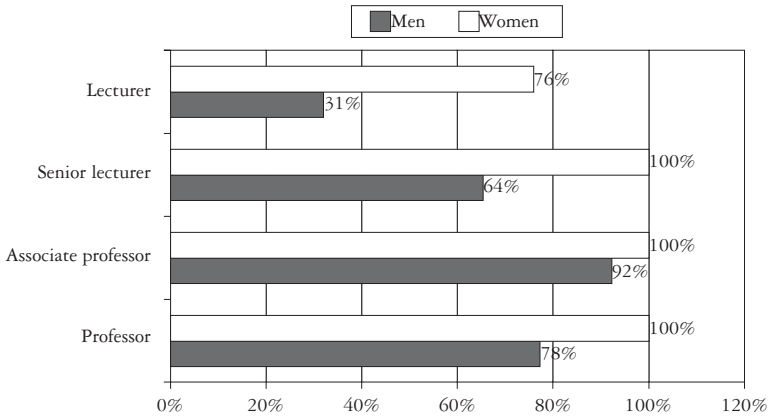
Figure 3 reflects the staff's responsibility for supervision in respect of master's candidates in terms of the number of completed dissertations supervised by women and by men. It clearly indicates that women have done "more senior work" than men, relative to the positions they occupy. This is especially true of women in the lower ranks.

Table 6: Permanent staff in the Faculty of the Humanities holding doctorates, 2001 (after promotions)

	Professor	%	Associate professor	%	Senior lecturer	%	Lecturer	%	Junior lecturer	%	Total	%
Women	1	100.0	5	100	11	91.67	12	37.50	0	0	29	55.77
Men	27	100.0	8	72.72	14	70.00	2	14.29	0	0	51	68.00

Source: Faculty of the Humanities 2001

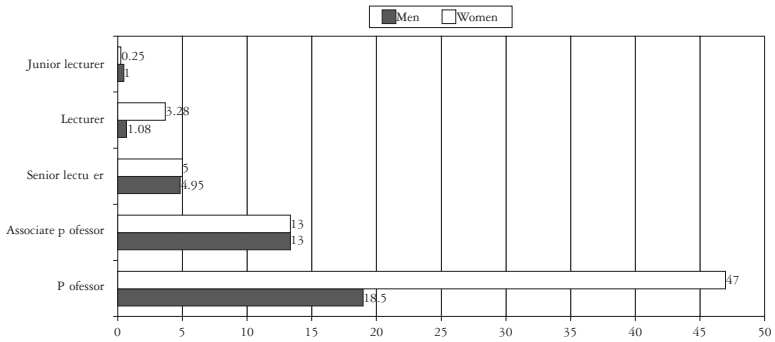
Figure 3: Permanent staff of the Faculty of the Humanities 2001: master's dissertations supervised



Source: Data from questionnaires

It is apparent from this figure that women carry a far heavier workload than men in respect of supervision. At the senior lecturer level (where the response rate was 100%) only 64% of the men had successfully performed supervision as opposed to 100% of the women. At the lecturer level, 76% of women (on a 76% response rate) had done so compared with 31% of the men (on a 93% response rate). Two inferences may be drawn from these data. In the first instance, women in lower positions carry more responsibility than men at the same level. Secondly, because of this teaching load, it would be fair to expect women to be less able to conduct and publish research. However, the next figure refutes this second inference.

Figure 4: Permanent staff of the Faculty of the Humanities 2001: average number of accredited articles published (nationally and internationally)



Source: Data from questionnaires

This figure illustrates that the average output is the same for women and men at the levels of associate professor and senior lecturer. Here the response rate was 100%. Significant discrepancies occur at the levels of professor and lecturer. The average of 47 for women at the former level represents the output of the sole woman professor, while the average of 18.5 derives from 18 of the 22 men at the professorial level (response rate 82%). At the lecturer level 13 of the 14 men (93%) responded to the questionnaire, and their average output was 1.08. By contrast the average output for 25 of the 33 women (76%) at this level was 3.28. Even if one were to surmise that the other eight women (the non-respondents) had not published any articles at all, the average output for the women would still be twice that of the men: 2.48 as opposed to 1.08.

The analysis above clearly indicates that, especially at the level of lecturer, women are better qualified than men, more women have performed postgraduate supervision and women's research output is higher. This is a classic example of the glass ceiling experienced by women. These findings, however, contrast with those of research performed in other countries. Thus, a comprehensive research report commissioned by the Australian National Tertiary Education Union, entitled *Gender Pay Equity in Australian Higher Education* (Gardner

1998), identified two important reasons why women occupy lower levels in that system. The first is that women generally have fewer years in university employment and the second that fewer women than men have PhDs (Gardner 1998: 2). Neither of these reasons is applicable as an explanation of the lack of promotion found in the UFS study. In respect of years in university employment, the average for women lecturers at the UFS was six years and for men seven, while 20% more women had doctorates than men.

In attempting to explain gender differences in ranking and reward in academe, one of two models may be used (cf Levin 1998: 1049). The first is the difference model, which proposes that the obstacles to women's career achievement are either innate or the result of gender role socialisation. The second model, namely the deficit model, holds that women as a group experience structural barriers, whether formal or informal, legal, political or social. This results in gender discrimination, for instance when they are differently rewarded for the same quality of role performance. This reading applies to the case in hand and is supported by Section 15(2) the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998) which defines such examples as employment barriers and acts of unfair discrimination which employers should eliminate. Two principles of the Employment Equity Act are relevant in this instance, namely equal pay for work of equal value and proportionality.

- The principle of equality

In terms of this principle, any double or unfair measures used to define merit and thus effect promotions are at present against the law. Violations of the principle of equality are defined in accordance with three important concepts.

First, the legal term "substantive equality" (section 22) means, in practical terms, that the effect of maternity leave or child breaks (the periods during which a woman interrupts or scales down her career to have and to care for children), for example, may not exert a negative influence on a woman's career. The idea that men and women can only be "equal" if women in the workplace hide all signs of their responsibility in respect of childcare at home is unfair and illegal.

As acknowledged by the Constitutional Court in the case *Hugo v State President*, whereby only female prisoners with children (and convictions for minor transgressions) were pardoned and released, before one can determine what is equal treatment, factual inequalities must be taken into account. Thus the rationale behind the principle of "substantive equality" is that women may not be negatively affected by the biological necessity that they must bear and nurse children. It is therefore against the law to make promotion or, for instance, the granting of research leave dependent on the obligation to attend international conferences, in the case of a woman with small children to care for. Any absence or scaling down of academic activity as a result of family obligations or pregnancy may not be held against a woman. Courts locally and in other jurisdictions have repeatedly rejected attempts by employers to link prejudice to the woman's unavailability or absence due to pregnancy or maternity leave.

In terms of affirmative action, as regulated by section 15(20)(c) of the Employment Equity Act, employers are obliged to accommodate women in a reasonable manner. Flexitime, shared work or part-time work (with proportionally reduced benefits) as well as childcare facilities are a woman's right and not a privilege.

The Act also stipulates that where an "employment barrier" has been identified by women the employer is obliged to address this progressively. This failure to improve the picture as represented in Table 2, in the not too distant future, would render the UFS liable to legal action and sanctions on the part of the government.

The term "substantive equality" is such that, as society moves in the direction of greater *de facto* equality — for instance, in view of the fact that men have a greater share in childcare and also qualify for "paternity leave" (section 33) — there will be less need for differentiated treatment.

Interestingly, though, the statistics in Table 6 reflect that in spite of the possibility of a child break, women in this Faculty are in many cases better qualified than men holding similar or even higher positions.

The second important concept in terms of equality relates to the principle of "indirect discrimination". This is prohibited by section 6 (1) of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998). Any ostensibly

neutral measure that has a proportionally greater detrimental effect on women than on men is indirectly discriminatory. For example, if a comparison of the time it takes women and men, respectively, to obtain their doctorates reveals that women are more negatively affected by the requirement that a doctorate be obtained at a specific time in one's career (for instance when promotion to the senior lecturer level normally takes place), this is tantamount to indirect discrimination. It is also indirect discrimination if more women are negatively affected by certain requirements for work benefits — if, as a result of past pregnancy, family responsibilities or career interruptions, they cannot meet certain requirements; or merely because discrimination was such that it was much more difficult for them to obtain research grants, bursaries, or the like. In the survey conducted in the Faculty of the Humanities, 23.81% of the respondents indicated that they had experienced discrimination in terms of appointment and 38.10% in terms of promotion. Most of these cases were defined as indirect discrimination.

Thirdly, the principle of equality is also affected by "direct discrimination". This is the most recognisable form of discrimination. If men and women have the same qualifications, "experience", publications, and so on, but women are appointed in lower positions and receive lower salaries, direct discrimination is present. In the survey conducted in the Faculty of the Humanities, only one of the five respondents who had indicated that they had been discriminated against at the time of their appointment identified this as direct discrimination as defined in the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998).

Where statistical data indicate that men with poorer qualifications than women were promoted or appointed at higher post levels, and where it is apparent that there were patterns of discrimination as indicated in Table 6, non-transparent appointment and promotion practices as well as the lack of fixed criteria for promotion give rise to the suspicion that women have been unfairly discriminated against. In this case, the UFS must prove the contrary. Intention (whether by design, premeditation or neglect) is not a precondition for discrimination. The law therefore acknowledges that discrimination can take place unwittingly or even with the best intentions, but that this does not in the least mitigate the harm, prejudice or suffering it can cause.

A distinction must be made between affirmative action, on the one hand, and the correction of the identified cases of direct discrimination, as described above, on the other hand. In terms of the Act identified crisis cases must be rectified immediately, while affirmative action denotes a future measure.

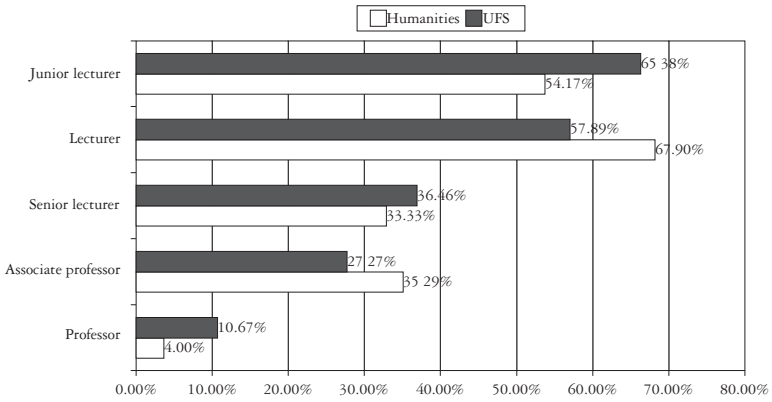
- The principle of proportionality

As has been indicated above, if women have suffered greater disadvantage than men, this is regarded as a form of "indirect discrimination" in terms of the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998). This implies that once the "employment barrier" of proportionally greater disadvantage suffered by women has been identified within an institution, that institution has no option in terms of the Act but to see to it that a plan for affirmative action is drawn up and that the matter is addressed progressively. In practical terms the principle of proportionality has the implication that even if only one male lecturer is found to have poorer qualifications and fewer publications than women in lower positions, all the affected women can, in terms of the Act, insist on progressive fair promotion (correction of the situation). This provision has retrospective effect, to the date when the Constitution became operative in 1994.

The principle of proportionality also comes into play in the following instance. Figure 5 compares the situation within the Faculty with that in the UFS at large and shows the disadvantaged position of some women in the Faculty of Humanities relative to those in the rest of the institution.

The data for the Faculty as represented in Figure 5 and Table 7 reflect, by and large, the same trends as were identified nationally and for the University at large (see Tables 1 and 2). It is striking, but not surprising, that the percentage of women in the Faculty of the Humanities is some 8% higher than that for the rest of the institution. What is disconcerting, though, is that 81.93% of the women in the Faculty are to be found in the lowest two categories (lecturer and junior lecturer) as opposed to only 67.14% in the other faculties. While there is room for improvement at the level of professor, it is at the levels of associate professor and lecturer that the Faculty seems to be at a particular disadvantage. Its figure for women at the level of associate professor is only a quarter of that of the rest of the institution.

Figure 5: Comparison of the percentage of women in the Faculty of the Humanities and the rest of the UFS, 2002



Source: UFS 2002

Yet its figure for female lecturers outstrips that of the rest of the institution by practically half as much again. Thus the Faculty has significantly fewer women in senior positions and more in junior positions than the average for the rest of the UFS.

In terms of the principle of proportionality, the UFS cannot evade its responsibility in respect of affirmative action by appealing to the aspect of decentralisation. In a court case, the UFS would be judged as an institution as a whole and it would not be possible to justify direct discrimination on the grounds of a compartmentalised economic policy. It has moreover been shown above — and further evidence can also be adduced — that the UFS's economic policy of compartmentalisation in faculties actually promotes institutional discrimination.

3. Mainstreaming gender equity at the UFS

There is a realisation within the corporate world that diversity among staff — in terms of gender, among other things — represents a source of competitive strength. The more people know about each other, the better they can work as a team towards the achievement of organisational objectives (Ghyoot 2000: 126). Acknowledging diversity also has an effect on the economy. The recent *World Competitive*

Table 7: Comparison of gender representation in the Faculty of the Humanities and within the rest of the UFS, 2002

	Professor		Associate professor		Senior lecturer		Lecturer		Junior lecturer		Total	
	Hum	UFS	Hum	UFS	Hum	UFS	Hum	UFS	Hum	UFS	Hum	UFS
Women	1	8	6	12	15	35	55	66	13	34	90	155
Men	24	67	11	32	30	61	26	48	11	18	102	226
Total	25	75	17	44	45	96	81	114	24	52	192	381
% Women	4.0	10.67	35.29	27.27	33.33	36.46	67.90	57.89	54.17	65.38	46.88	40.68

Source: UFS 2002

Yearbook (1997) rates South Africa last of 46 countries in respect of the competitiveness of its workforce (Pieterse 1998: 40). A skilled workforce increases a country's competitiveness. Racial discrimination, coupled with the long-term denial of opportunities to blacks, women and people with disabilities, has resulted in a very low level of overall skills in the South African labour market. It has been stated that inequalities lead to market distortions, which in turn result in the inadequate utilisation of resources. It follows that the reduction of inequality in society is a means of promoting economic growth (Pieterse 1998: 40). These sentiments were echoed at the United Nations Pre-Least Developed Countries III workshop held in Cape Town in March 2001 (UN 2001).

It is undeniable that historical discriminatory practices of recruitment and promotion, as well as reluctance and fear of change and diversity, lack of networks for women, and lack of mentors, are ongoing factors in the workplace. Overall, the cultural stereotyping of women is the most formidable barrier. Whether in terms of pay, location, or promotion, research on women and work consistently indicates that, despite some recent changes, structural obstacles to women's advancement in the labour force persist. Although these are not identical to the formal barriers of the past, they have similar effects. These findings were echoed in the case study presented here. The point is that the barriers are built into the character of the workplace, not just the intentions of individuals. This study found that, perhaps more so than in the past, because of the current legislation, women still perceive the organisational culture as discriminatory and, although most say that things have improved, the vast majority also say that further changes are needed.

3.1 Implications for the organisation

The solution to the lack of upward mobility for women lies principally in changing the organisational culture, ie in removing organisational barriers in respect of gender equity. Organisational barriers usually manifest themselves in the form of time, money or resources. The lack of any one of these factors renders the other two ineffective. Equal opportunities programmes, like any other company policy, can

succeed only if given high priority in terms of time and resources (Beck & Steel 1989: 45-6).

Gender equity therefore has economic implications for the institution if the imbalances are to be rectified. At present, the UFS, not unlike other South African universities, is faced with tremendous economic challenges and is still undergoing a process of rationalisation. Under the circumstances the probable reaction to any demands that the problems identified be corrected could be indifference in the face of the daunting task of restructuring the workforce. The obvious response would be: "How can some people be promoted, if others must lose their jobs?" However, according to the Employment Equity Act, the UFS cannot escape its responsibility in terms of equity by appealing to the cost aspect. It is repeatedly emphasised in jurisprudence that cost does not offset the duty to attain equality, and that in the absence of evidence that some effort and advances have been made, the discrimination will be labelled "unfair".

It was shown in this study that in some respects the position of women in the Faculty of the Humanities is worse than the average position in the rest of the UFS. Thus, not only are there imbalances between women and men in the Faculty of the Humanities; there are also discrepancies between faculties. In the event of a lawsuit it would be possible to indicate that the UFS's economic policy of compartmentalisation in terms of faculties and departments which, viewed individually, are all too "poor" to effect equality, promotes institutional inequality rather than eradicating it.

3.2 Inequalities to be addressed

Considering all the data that this study has produced, although the results are not generalisable, it is apparent that a number of inequalities which remain urgently require attention. The following aspects need to be addressed:

- Many of the problems identified in the study with regard to women's disadvantaged position within the UFS and in the Faculty of the Humanities in particular can be attributed to the lack of a performance management system. Aspects of this deficiency, such

as the lack of clear, non-discriminatory guidelines for appointment and promotion, contravene the Employment Equity Act.[6]

- Identified cases of discrimination and employment barriers within the UFS should be addressed immediately, rather than being dependent on progressive affirmative action strategies. These cases do not fall within the ambit of affirmative action, as that is a future measure. Furthermore, it is recommended not only that women who qualify should be promoted, but that positive efforts should be made to recruit more black women in order to equalise the number of women and men at all levels.
- A woman should never be promoted into a higher-level managerial position without the experience and training necessary to ensure an effective performance. It is therefore recommended that personal development opportunities be provided for women, especially in terms of long-term career planning, leadership skills, assertiveness training and so on. The implementation of a mentoring programme should receive serious consideration.
- Women's full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels is of the utmost importance in order to empower them and to challenge gender power relations. It is therefore recommended that the composition of committees (for instance faculty committees) and structures (such as the senate) be investigated so as to ensure better representation of women.
- From what women seem to experience in terms of management, it is imperative that awareness training for managers concerning the benefits of women in senior management be made compulsory.
- Because of women's lack of knowledge of current labour legislation, it is recommended that workplace rights be communicated to women by means of workshops.
- To create an enabling environment, the sexual and emotional harassment that women suffer must be addressed. The UFS's policy on sexual harassment is currently being reviewed in accordance with labour legislation. Upon completion, both women and men will need to be informed about harassment in the workplace.

6 The UFS is currently introducing a Performance Management Programme.

Because of the progressive labour legislation of this country, it may seem as if women's struggle for equality is over, yet in many respects they still lag behind. Also, such legislation in itself cannot bring about the changes sought by government. The Employment Equity Act has been described as "an enabling piece of legislation" (Ray 1998: 52) and is applicable to all employers of 50 or more employees, or with a certain turnover. However, since the reality depends on an employer's employment equity plan, often cast in relative and expansive time-frames, it follows that problems cannot be "legalised away". The effectiveness of the implementation of the Employment Equity Act depends largely on the commitment of employers to the goals they set for themselves, as well as on the degree of concern from among stakeholders. The ideal is to go beyond supporting the minimal requirements of legislation. Ultimately, however, it is men's attitudes that have to change if women are to become empowered in a way similar to most men in senior positions. Conversely, the above-mentioned recommendations can be effected only if women are prepared to take advantage of the improvements made on their behalf. Once the organisational culture has changed it is women who must support and lobby for one another.

4. Conclusion

As in parallel organisations, the transformation of the organisational culture at the UFS in respect of gender equity is slow-moving, despite the enabling legislation. In the main, financial constraints have of late seriously hampered any progress. In fact, mainstreaming gender — defined as a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of all aspects of policies and programmes in order for women and men to benefit equally — has not been seriously addressed. Unless the institution effects a *tour de force* similar to what it achieved in respect of the financial turn-around strategy, the ultimate goal of mainstreaming gender, namely the achievement of gender equity, will remain unattained. It is, however, clear that the management of the institution is committed to change in this respect — equity and diversity being among the four strategic aims — and although women feel that in many instances there is still too much talk and not enough action, it would seem that there is a glimmer through the glass ceiling.

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