

Access or inclusion?

Conceptualisation and operationalisation of gender equality in Zimbabwean state universities.

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This article explores concerns about gender inequality in Zimbabwean state universities. The researcher's interest arose from the realisation of persistent gender inequalities despite initiatives to close gender gaps. Of particular concern is the conceptualization and operationalisation of gender equality in institutions. Focusing only on the student admissions sector, this paper critically surveys the experiences of the departmental chairpersons and students who enrolled through affirmative action, their vision of gender equality and the impact thereof on the inclusion of the said students in the mainstream. The study applied a gender perspective to development as well as in-depth and focus group interviews with purposively sampled stakeholders. The findings of the study shed light on the adopted tailoring model of gender equality by the institutions and how the model blinkered the other qualitative gender dimensions of the mainstream, rendering the envisaged goal of gender equality elusive due to the exclusion of the students from the mainstream. Based on the findings, useful recommendations are made to resuscitate the almost paralysed gender equality agenda of the institutions.

Key words: gender equality, model of equality, tailoring approach, sustainable development, gender dimensions, social change, social inclusion.

Introduction

Discussion of gender inequality in Zimbabwean universities is not new (Nziramasanga Commission, 1999) and has been on the agenda for quite some time (Thabethe, 2009). Although Zimbabwe discourages and renounces it, gender inequality is persistent in Zimbabwean educational institutions, (Thabethe, 2009). The study is derived from the implemented gender initiatives in Zimbabwean state universities against a background of persistent gender inequality. In 2000, the country adopted

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its National Gender Policy – a document that commits the nation to attainment of gender equality in all its sectors of the economy (Zimbabwe National Gender Policy (ZNGP), 2000). Universities, as autonomous institutions, were mandated to devise own strategies to eradicate gender inequality within the organisations.

Gender equality is, however one of those concepts that take different meanings with different situations, and as such, different conceptions/visions of gender equality abound. The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid), for example, defines gender equality as the equal valuing of the roles of women and men, as well as overcoming barriers of stereotypes so that males and females equally benefit from development, (AusAid, 2007). The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) takes the same concept to mean equal participation of men and women in making decisions and removing the gap between women's and men's access to and control of resources and benefit of development (CIDA, 2007). The different visions of gender equality have directed organisational efforts in attaining the goal of gender equality in different directions. Against a backdrop of persistent gender inequalities, and despite implementation of gender interventions, this article sets out to establish the models/visions of gender equality that the Zimbabwean state universities have adopted. The study also assessed the effectiveness of the model/approach in attaining gender equality. The study's sought to answer the following question: How is the concept of gender equality understood and worked out in student admissions in Zimbabwean state universities?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical approach underpinning this study is the gender perspective to development (Morgan, Heeks & Arun, 2004). According to this perspective, while approaches to research in gender aspects in development could vary, research in gender inequality requires a wide scope that incorporates the culture and society in which men and women work and live (Morgan et al, 2004). The gender perspective to development incorporates ideas from the feminist theories of gender inequalities as well, (Morgan et al, 2004,). For this reason the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2004) calls the approach a "connectionist perspective on development". The gender connectionist approach argues that gender inequalities, as social constructs, are not fixed bipartite divisions, are not immune to human re-examination, and can thus be changed to achieve equality and equity for men and women, (Connell, 2002). This theory was also chosen for its emphasis on the impact of gender on people's opportunities and interactions, as well as for its premise that successful implementation of any policy, programme or project is affected directly by the impact of gender, which, in turn, influences the process of social development (Gender Mainstreaming Manual, 2008).

Gender equality in the global debate

Three perspectives in the gender equality debate have been identified and have given rise to “contested visions of and routes to gender equality” (Walby, 2004:6). These three perspectives and the routes and the visions of gender equality are discussed below.

1. The sameness perspective

According to the growing body of literature, (Jahan, 1995; Walby, 2004), the sameness model of gender equality is the first and oldest model for promoting equality between men and women. This model is based on a moral principle of justice i.e. treat like cases as like (Squires, 1999). This is achieved by identifying areas of unequal treatment and eliminating them via the legal route. Treating males and females in the same way is taken as law by this model. This is why Liebenberg (1997) calls the model “formal equality” while Squires (1999) calls it “strict equality” and Freire (1992) calls the it “egalitarian equality.” The underlying idea of this model is that relevantly similar cases should be treated identically. Clearly then, in this perspective, gender is marked as an attribute that is not significant in distribution of social value (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Prohibiting discrimination is in essence taken as a matter of changing policy or enacting and enforcing new gender-inclusive laws.

The approach expresses a liberal feminist idea that removing discrimination in the legal framework gives women and men the same status (Status of Women Canada, 2005). But is this really true? Is this not why Rees (2004) calls the model “tinkering with gender inequality”? In dealing with gender inequality in education in South Africa, (Coetzee, 2001), it was established that legislation on its own, though vital, is not sufficient to remove gender inequalities.

The weakness of this model is that the goal of gender equality is achieved by means of assimilating the disadvantaged sex group into the values and lifestyles of the dominant group (Stevens & Van Lamoen, 2001).

2. The tailoring model

With this approach, gender equality is achieved by tailoring situations to fit the needs of the disadvantaged sex group. Thus measures and facilities are sought only for the disadvantaged sex group. The underlying thinking is that:

equal rights cannot always be used by all citizens to the same extent because of persistent gender inequalities that exist at the level of societies. ... (therefore there is need) to counter balance the unequal starting positions of men and women in most societies” (Verloo, 2001:3).

The model, thus, pursues material equality by promoting equality of outcome which is in turn achieved by equalizing the starting positions (Stevens & Van Lamoen, 2001). In most gender circles, this is “Gender Affirmative Action” because the model targets a particular sex group. The Council of Europe (1998) calls the strategy

“targeted projects”, while the African Development Bank calls the same “stand-alone initiatives”.

The main weakness of this model is that it stimulates the disadvantaged sex group to enter the systems as they are, in other words the disadvantaged sex group is assimilated into the status quo that in itself is not under discussion (Stevens & Van Lamoen, 2001). The other weakness of this model is that, in rectifying the inequality, violations are made to the principle of gender equality which the programs are supposed to uphold.

3. The diversity model

The diversity model was born out of current gender analysis revelations that suggest that both men and women are vulnerable to the way in which gender relations are at play within their contexts. So the target is not men or women, but, the gendered contexts. Because of this focus, Walby (2004) calls the model a “transformation of gender relations” she views the approach as replacing the segregated contexts and standards associated with masculinity and femininity. The approach, therefore, aims for a social change of the status quo towards the gender equality agenda.

This model addresses the problem of gender inequalities at a more structural level than the other two. The focus of the approach thus pursues a situation in which all policies and programmes are informed by the diverse needs of their beneficiaries, whether male or female. The diversity model extends beyond the dichotomy that is represented by the first two perspectives (Squires, 1999). While the concern of the two perspectives is for men and women to gain equal access, the focus of the third model is acceptability and inclusion of men and women in the systems (Wilson, 2004). “Inclusion” in this study refers to a process by which the universities have developed their cultures, and practices to include all students into the mainstream, namely. philosophies and practices that allow all students to feel respected, confident, belonging and safe, (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009) In this study specifically, inclusion implies a total blurring of boundaries between students who would have enrolled through affirmative action and those who are in the mainstream.

The diversity model requires fundamental changes in institutional and individual behaviour, whereas the first two perspectives require institutional action in the form of reviewing and changing the policies, rules and regulations which discriminate against students who enrolled through gender initiatives. While these two approaches involve matters of quantifiable mechanical politics, the diversity model involves qualitative politics. Qualitative politics require fundamental changes in values of the constituency. The focus of the first two approaches is attaining gender parity, while the focus of the third approach is social change, in fact change of attitudes, and behaviors, (Unterhalter, 2004; Walby, 2004; World Bank, 2001). Thus while the first two approaches target numerical equilibrium, the third targets the underlying causes of the critical social problems that gave rise to the inequalities, (Verloo, 2001).

Methodology

The Research Design

Although it employed elements of both quantitative and qualitative research, this study adopted a qualitative focus mainly, which was consistent with its aim of exploring an in-depth understanding of the chairpersons' conception and application of gender equality and also students' experiences of the implemented gender initiatives. (At the two institutions that were studied, chairpersons of departments were involved both in the actual selection of students into their departments and in the actual teaching of the selected students). The chosen design was an exploratory descriptive survey within a case study and was necessitated by the need to study the phenomena in their natural settings. Two state universities in Zimbabwe took part in the study and for the sake of protecting the rights and welfare of the universities (Bryman, 2001), the two institutions are referred to as site A and site B.

The Research Sites

Both site A and site B were established during the era in which the country had joined the international community in pushing for gender equality in the various economic sectors. With regard to the numbers of enrolled student and diversity of programmes offered, Site A was a relatively bigger institution than Site B. The two institutions were purposively sampled in order to gain insights into gender initiatives from both large and small institutions.

The Study Sample

The sample for this study comprised chairpersons of selecting departments and students who enrolled through gender equality initiatives. Only departments that enrolled students through affirmative action were involved. The departments were, therefore, sampled purposively because they were chosen based on their relevance and relationship to the topic under study, (Leedy, 1997; Bryman, 2001; Holloway & Todres 2003). There were 10 chairpersons from the Faculty of Natural Resource Management and Agriculture (six from site A and four from site B) and 12 from the Faculty of Science (seven from site A and five from site B). Concerning these chairpersons, first, stratified random sampling was employed which divided the chairpersons into groups as per their faculties and their sites of operation. Secondly, using the hat system, only three were selected from each faculty, each site. In all, twelve chairpersons were interviewed.

To gain insights into how students framed their experiences of gender equality initiatives, I chose a cohort of successful students in their final year final semester. These students, I felt have had a fuller experience of university life. I selected only those who were beneficiaries of the gender initiatives. Eight of them were randomly selected from the Faculty of Science per each institution and six from Faculty of

Natural Resource Management and Agriculture per each institution. In all 28 students took part in the study.

Data Gathering

The interview was the sole instrument used to gather data for the study. With the chairpersons, the one-on-one interview was semi-structured and each session lasted at least 45 minutes. All the interviews were audio-taped. The interview was chosen, notwithstanding its disadvantages (Deem, 2002) because it enabled the researcher to acquire information that respondents would not have given by means of written communication. Flexibility was the prime advantage of this instrument (Thomas & Nelson, 2001), because I could pursue leads and further clarify questions that were not understood well. This eliminated gaps from the data. Another advantage of this instrument was that feedback was instant. Interviews were conducted from November to December 2010 at both sites. All interviews were conducted in the participants' offices, all face to face, and only by the researcher. The advantage of this was consistency in the data-gathering process.

Concerning the 28 students, data were gathered by means of four (two at each site) focus group interviews. A focus group interviews, as Holloway and Todres (2003) advocate is a useful method of collecting data on perceptions and experiences. I brought the students together in a room to engage on the discussion. My face-to-face involvement as the moderator ensured that the discussion stayed on track that none of the participants felt under pressure to agree with the dominant group and also that none of them dominated the discussion. Notwithstanding the disadvantages of this method, the greatest advantage was that the results were generated quickly in a relatively cost effective way. Also, contrary to my initial fears that students would be reluctant to share information publicly, the dynamism and flexibility of the instrument allowed for free and open discussions. Moreover, the instrument provided shared experiences that individuals would not have provided otherwise.

Data Analysis

In this study data analysis and interpretation as tools of research (Wolcott, 1994) did not operate exclusively. In line with the gender perspective to development: data were subjected to a level of scrutiny that revealed both the explicit and implicit gender dimensions. While there are no hard and fast rules on how to analyze qualitative data, the analysis in this study was guided mainly by Strauss & Corbin (1998)'s stages of thematic data analysis. This involved the inductive coding of data from the one-to-one interviews and from the focus group interviews to find common themes. The following five stages were identified:

First, data were read, and frames of analysis were analysed. Secondly, these frames of analysis were labeled with a code, i.e phrases suggesting how they informed the research question. Thirdly, the coding led to the formation of categories/groups

of similar issues. The fourth stage saw the formation of relationships between categories, leading to broad themes consistent with the research questions. The themes emerged from the data. Finally, from these themes, conclusions were drawn. These themes are the sub-headings under “Research findings”.

Throughout the process of data gathering and analysis, rigour was maintained to ensure trustworthiness of the data (Shenton, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Research findings and discussion

The chairpersons’ conception of gender equality was found to be deriving from their understanding of gender as a concept. To these chairpersons, “gender” was taken as a synonym for “women” and “gender inequality” as the disadvantages that female students are facing. The following two interview extracts illustrate the ways in which gender and gender equality were conceived.

“Eh-eh-eh, we look at gender, gender actually gender equality, is synonymous with promotion of women or advantaging women. The idea is men are already up there” (Chair B)

“I have heard workshops on gender here on campus. These were workshops that only wanted ladies... They call the ladies. I haven’t seen any man go there. So gender is woman! Woman! Woman! (laughs, slightly shaking head). We are in trouble with gender I tell you. Even in politics there, I hear they are saying Woman! Woman! I think it’s the women era.” (Chair F responding to a question on whether he had received any gender awareness training).

These responses were reflective of the views of 10/12 (83.33%) chairpersons. The responses reflected a narrow framing of “gender”, if not a misconception of the word. “Gender” is not “women”. The misconception of the word “gender” geared the chairpersons towards “an exclusive female-student” target. No wonder why all the students selected for focus group interviews happened to be females only. Rather than targeting gender (a social construct with inequalities shaped by the social relations), the institutions targeted female students and, to them, achieving gender equality implies increasing female students’ enrolments in the academic departments.

Model of gender equality pursued

The chairpersons’ vision of gender and gender equality dictated and directed the institutional approach to gender equality. The study established that the institutions pursued the ‘tailoring model of gender equality’ (tailoring the programs to fit the needs of the disadvantaged sex group) (Walby, 2004). The underprivileged sex group, according to the role players in student admissions, were female students; hence all the gender programmes were efforts to accommodate female students in the university degree programs. The sole focus of the programmes was to achieve gender parity in the various fields where female students were underrepresented, notably in

Science and in Natural Resource Management and Agriculture. The institution aimed to achieve this parity by means of affirmative action, making it very explicit that all roads have led to an increase in female student numbers in the departments (be it by lowering of points, bridging or quota reservations). The calculated growth rates of female students at Site B were 2006 - 4%; 2007 - 17%; 2008 - 25%; 2009 - 12% and 2010 - 33%. The year 2008 proved to be very difficult year, with political upheavals and hyperinflation. During that year most universities closed, lecturers left for greener pastures and some departments were forced to close due to a shortage of teaching staff and unsustainable numbers in student enrolments with many students not being able to pay the fees. The calculated growth rates of female students at Site A are: 2006 - 13%; 2007 - 28%; 2008 - 13%; 2009 - 38% and 2010 - 41%. (Statistics obtained from the offices of student admissions). The increase in student enrolments seemed to be the situation in most Zimbabwe universities. Mashinga (2012), University World News, acknowledged the sharp increase in the number of female students at institutions of higher learning. This is understandable, at least, in the context of the history of Zimbabwean higher education systems which had females as their most disadvantaged learners. Clearly then, accessibility and availability of female students as a goal was achieved.

However, gleaning insights from Unterhalter (2004) and from Wilson (2004), there is nothing wrong with equalising numbers, but instead of stopping there, gender equality demands that targets view numbers as a means to a bigger purpose. Wilson (2004) and De Wall (2006) argue that gender parity is not gender equality. An exclusive focus on numbers can present quantifiable progress in student admissions, but, this alone could hide real patterns of discrimination and disadvantage as was witnessed in this study. While gender parity is quantitative, gender equality is qualitative. In this study efforts by the institutions did not apportion significant value to the qualitative dimensions of the gender gap. Both the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the institutional efforts missed this point. Parity alone addresses only female students' rights or access to education but not their rights within education and rights through education (Wilson, 2004). Gender equality is right to education, in education and through education, which was revealed by the results from the focus group interviews. The majority of students felt stigmatised, negatively and inequitably treated, and marginalised by some of their lecturers and fellow students. The focus group interviews revealed that students felt regarded as:

less fitting and proficient for the academic mill. My experience is that the stigma faded as we got to level 4 (the final year) but during our first and second years it was quite clear that there was a difference, an academic difference between us and the other lot. It was worse off with us who got in through bridging (Interjection – How did the lecturers and other students know that you had gone in through bridging?). Laugh, disruption from fellow students, then continued to talk with observable screws on the face and lots of hand throws: Mem(sic) ah! Our own lecturers kept their selection list of first year and sometimes they would leave them on the table. Sometimes they openly referred to us as Affirmative Action students" (student D).

Interjection from student A:

And others would openly say those who got in through other means would find it tough. It was very clear what the other means was – obviously Affirmative Action. We had invisibly but quite apparent tags and labels. Whatever the labels, they were derogatory. Reacting to a direct question: Have you ever feel or were you ever made to feel discriminated against from the other mainstream students? Student H responded:

Oh! Yes. Especially, the good part of my first year. I was kept reminded and this made me shy participation in class. Even our friendship circles – we found out that we were paired more on grounds of mode of entry. We from Affirmative Action had our own clicks. But now I think it's almost gone. Maybe it's because most of us through Affirmative Action ferry(sic) just as the other lot, because we also have failures, repeaters and carries from the other lot, sometimes worse than us.

On the same question, student E said:

Discrimination not exactly, but non acceptance especially in group work. Yet other similar feelings came from student L: We were definitely labelled, stigmatised and inferiorised. Sometimes you could feel that your response is looked down upon quietly, sometimes the lecturer would brush off the response, scenically giggles, and the face would become serious when it was concerning those from the accepted lot. Even the way she would respond was different. In the end we feared to try.

I also asked a few group members to say a word or phrase that could describe their views of the affirmative action initiatives. Students did not provide single words or phrases, they provided paragraphs despite the instruction. By and large, their views and feeling towards the initiatives were in the affirmative. This could be because they were all beneficiaries of the initiatives. It was only about the way in which they were dealt with that they seemed unhappy.

The initiatives per se are effective. They are quite well thought out and purposeful. If it were not for them the vast majority of us wouldn't have pursued a degree programme of our choice. I had always wanted to pursue a science related career and had it not be for them, I would definitely not be here doing what I am doing, (student J).

The initiatives (sic) okay, but accommodation by others as equally competent needs reworking. You see, the moment you feel excluded, the moment your self esteem is crashed to zero and to pick it from zero is a problem. This is when you feel uncomfortable in the lecture room but outside (student L).

I personally felt threatened by the cold feelings our lecturers and other students showed. But where I am different with others here is that the inferiority complex made me want to prove that I am not insufficient brain wise. The initiatives make us prove certain points, (student F).

I asked the group members if there was anything their institution did or was doing to make sure that they fitted into the mainstream once admitted. Most just shook their hands. One of them remarked:

Ah! Nothing. Once in that's it. They did not even come to us to see how we are getting along (student J).

Yet another group member said:

Do you think they know this. You are the first person here to ask us about our welfare as a group. I think if they wanted to know then we should have been told during enrolment that as we were irregular students then we should come back and report irregularities (student C).

Thus gender parity equilibrium (which is emphasised by the tailoring model of mainstreaming gender equality) is only a prima facie change (Unterhalter, 2004), and, on its own, even attained cannot provide for a gender inclusive environment. Yet a gender inclusive and responsive environment is a prerequisite for achievement of gender equality de facto (Lombardo, 2003: 2-17). It is important that female students not only get access into university education, but that they get adapted and accepted in and through university education. The study found that the female students had access but remained excluded, unwelcome and unwanted by the mainstream. This adaptability and acceptability imply inclusion (Wilson, 2004). It would appear that sufficient educational opportunities for female students are only the first step towards student inclusion into areas of study, more is needed to get them adapted and included in the mainstream. Thus, though parity is a necessary ingredient of gender equality, it is however, an insufficient precondition for the realisation of real gender equality. The targets of the institutions should, then, not have been only the prohibition of discrimination de jure, but also the elimination of discrimination de facto (Wilson, 2004).

Attitudes of chairpersons towards a gender equality agenda

A reading of some of the responses from the chairperson interview transcripts revealed a somewhat negative perception of the gender initiatives from them. The chairpersons viewed the issues of gender and what they stood for as potential trouble causers. Sentiments and comments such as: "We are in trouble with gender I tell you...Let's see."(chairperson 8) are testimony to the chairpersons' scepticism of the gender initiatives. The Let's see expresses doubt about the success of gender initiatives. Such feelings about gender issues from Zimbabwean men (all the interviewed chairpersons were male) are not surprising. As Gaidzanwa (2012) notes, the development of gender issues have been problematic within Zimbabwe as a whole. The way that issues of gender have been introduced in Zimbabwe seemed to align the issues with a preference for females without adequate explanations for doing it.

This resulted in little tolerance from men, and indeed from some women, and the predominant mode of dealing with this issue, like that of women's rights and homosexuality has been to label them to be "Western" as a way of delegitimizing them, (Phillips, 2009). It was not surprising when one of the chairpersons, seemingly furious, commented:

I think we are shooting ourselves in the foot. Very soon we will begin to see effects of this gender, bad effects for that matter. Universities by their nature should focus on entry points, not whether one is male or female. That's nonsense absolutely. Get me right. I am not saying females not come to university. No, I am only saying let them be equally deserving as the males. If they deserve, they deserve but if they don't they don't. Why should we take what we do not need? Why compromise our reputation and mandate? (chairperson 12).

In the same vein, another chairperson had this to say:

We are taking these gender issues too far. Let it remain a political thing not educational. Politics and education is miles apart. You are devaluing and degrading the quality of university education, and in the process watering down our self esteem concerning the whole thing (chairperson 5).

Yet another remarked: Gender is a modernist agenda, bent on destroying the African fabric. We have our own way of doing things. Let's stick to that. What's wrong with that? Who complained? People should not sit in Beijing to decide for us here. Western ideas need to be taken with pinches of salt. Why do you want us to be black by skin but white by heart? (chairperson 11).

These were more or less the views of 10 out of 12 chairpersons and as Phillips, (2009, 350) notes about sexuality in Zimbabwe, such persons find gender initiatives as a "festering finger to be eradicated, chopped off and kept separate..." There was no doubt, tension and contradiction between the spirit behind the gender initiatives and the ideals of the chairpersons. The chairpersons' feelings poignantly illustrate the reason why some of them failed to accommodate students who had been enrolled through affirmative action, and hence made them feel alienated, non-included, if not discriminated against.

The net effect established was that the beneficiaries of the gender equality initiatives felt alienated from the broader mainstream. The negativity shown by the majority of the chairpersons made me probe on how the gender initiatives had been introduced into the mainstream. The probes revealed that:

what we got was word. No. A directive, from administration that this was now new university policy for our departments, in line with country drives towards gender equality, (chairperson 10).

Asked as to whether they had been work-shopped on the new university policy, all the chairpersons indicated that they were not work-shopped.

Not exactly, but alerted of new developments with immediate effect in 2006 (chairperson 2).

It would appear that the sort of imposition was the main reason why there was no “connectedness and cohesiveness” of the chairpersons with the gender initiatives. Yet Kelles-Viitanen and Shrestha, (2011) caution that for any new initiative not to be compromised, “connectedness and cohesiveness” of all stakeholders should not be an option but a priority. Without engaging the whole constituency, there always is little change in power structures or “rules of the game” (Kelles-Viitanen & Shrestha, 2011). It is its absence here, that seemingly resulted in the fact that student beneficiaries of the gender initiatives gain access to the mainstream but remained excluded from it. This finding concurs with Hlalele and Alexander (2012)’s study on ‘university access and social justice’. Similar to the current study, the duo found that university access programmes inherently produced “segregated and stigmatised” students, (Hlalele & Alexander, 487).

Prospects and challenges

The study established the tailoring model’s strength and success in its ability to increase female student enrolment in the university. However, besides achieving this huge quantitative growth in female student enrolments, the adopted model of equality blinkered the actors from attending to other qualitative gender dimensions of the mainstream because their focus remained glued to numbers as an end in itself. Gender equality is not only about providing the same programmes for male and female students, but also to provide opportunities that mean the same to each gender (Bloom & Covington, 2001).

The study further established that, beyond the gender parity venture, no other gender initiatives had been implemented.. Parity was an end in itself and a reading of the responses indicated that the female students remained excluded from the mainstream. As Stevens and Van Lamoen (2001) have observed, the tailoring approach placed the females students in a status quo (that initially excluded them) and that was not under discussion.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The following main findings were made:

- The institutional conceptions of gender and gender equality (revealed by the chairpersons) were misplaced and resulted resulting in limited targets and limited achievement of the grand goal of gender equality.

- The model of gender equality which was pursued was tailoring. The model realized growing female student numbers and their improved access into university, but the challenge was the exclusion of the female students from the mainstream. Female students who had entered the universities as a result of gender initiatives were made to feel that they were underprepared academically, if not deficient and had gained into the university somehow illegitimately. Their environment was not in any way supportive of their plight because there were no mechanisms by the institution that supported them. Hlalele and Alexander (2012) warn of two issues that are detrimental to student inclusion: Lack of support for both students and lecturers and ii) failure to eliminate occurrences of barriers to student inclusion.
- Forced regard, revolt and protest regarding the worthiness and value of the implemented gender initiatives existed among the chairpersons. Yet an important indicator of sustainability of any institutional venture is how well the institutional approach supports new initiatives into its regular systems. The lack of such engagement resulted in gender change being made only as window dressing, as it remained only an issue of access but without inclusion.

Recommendations

Based on the main findings, the following recommendations are made:

- There is need for a reconceptualization of the gender agenda and a paradigm shift in operationalization of the gender agenda. Gender awareness-workshopping cannot be overemphasized.
- The diversity model of gender equality should be adopted so as to achieve structural changes on gender equality. The disadvantaged sex group should not only be included in the mainstream but also accepted and be able to exercise a controlling presence in the mainstream. Inclusion implies no discrimination of any learner on any aspect that is assigned significance by society (Hlalele & Alexander, 2012). The operationalisation approach should appeal to mainstream attitudes, behaviours, habits, perceptions and practices. To this end, there is need for massive gender education and conscientisation of the mainstream so that there is gender awareness and appreciation and a challenge of female student subordination on a cognitive, behavioural and affective level
- There is need for intensive and extensive reorientation and managing of the negative mainstream perceptions towards gender initiatives in order to establish compatibility between their attitudes and the introduced gender initiatives. The reorientation could be achieved by means of incremental gender empowerment workshops and massive gender education with the aim to curb avoidance behaviour by the enculturation of the mainstream.

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