Chapter 4
Theoretical Discussion of Gender and Power:
The Case of the University of Botswana

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents gender disparities found in the faculty of education at the time of this study. These are discussed from a theoretical point of view. The author takes a view that gender mainstreaming is a contested concept, practiced in various ways by governments, institutions and departments. Although practice varies, the aim is to eradicate gender inequality completely. This implies that any workplace that intends to support gender equity must also support multiculturalism. If multiculturalism is practiced in an institution or organization, the organizational culture will provide a leeway for gender diversity. The objective of this chapter is to compare the institutional culture to the societal culture of the University of Botswana. Gender mainstreaming practices at UB are analyzed. The chapter describes observed gender disparities, possible solutions and suggestions for what seems to work for the future. It also explains gender discrimination as rooted in both organizational and societal culture.

INTRODUCTION

It is important to recognize and appreciate the impact of conventions such as the 1990 World Conference on Education held in Jomtien, Thailand; the 1995 World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China; the 1997 Humburg International Conference on Adult Education; and the 2000 World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal. The important result of these forums was that 2015 was targeted as a year by which gender disparities would be eliminated in primary and secondary education. Also, by the same year, 2015, gender equality would have been achieved with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to quality basic education (World Education Forum, 2000).

Since the Beijing conference, Botswana has taken significant measures to create a policy and environment that promotes gender equality. Discriminatory Laws have been reviewed. Political commitment to gender is reflected in appointments of women to cabinet and senior positions in the civil service, and the establishment of a fully fledged department responsible for coordinating the implementation of the government policy on gender. After twenty years of improvement, gender disparities in the faculty of education are examined. The objective is to compare organizational culture which is multicultural to the societal culture in which UB is founded. The attempt to seek solutions for combating gender discrimination is also discussed. The chapter describes efforts for solutions as carried out by the institution, and suggestions of what seems to work for the future.

BACKGROUND

The chapter presents a theoretical discussion of Gender mainstreaming as a process that encapsulates many of the tensions and dilemmas in feminist theory and practice. The presentation is based on a view that conceptualizes mainstreaming as a theoretical element that provides debates on how to move theory and practice of gender equality. (Behning & Pascual 2001; Lombardo, Meier, & Verloo, 2007; Walby 2001; Woodward, 2003). Botswana is a signatory to many accords and as such she is responsible to them and must meet assignments suggested by such assemblies. The University of Botswana's efforts to promote gender equity and equality are highly visible and this has been achieved through the establishment of structures such the Gender Policy and Programme Committee (GPPC) in 1992 that has been established primarily to oversee the implementation of its gender policy.

This is in line with the theoretical concepts of mainstreaming. Conceptually, mainstreaming as a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs. The process has to cut across all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve equality. And the GPPC attempts to achieve this goal.

Another development that may be viewed as an effort on UB's part in promoting gender equity and equality has been the formulation and effecting structures such as the Sexual Harassment Policy in August 2001. In fact, UB is among the few institutions in the country that has come up with a clearly defined gender policy in the early 2000's, the policy is solely designed to ensure that all forms of gender discrimination are nipped at the budding point. The extent to which this policy is working in UB, has not yet become apparent. Nevertheless, it is a welcome development on UB's management. There is still a need for a fair platform to be set on which to establish how gender mainstreaming may be achieved and whether it is really being practiced. There is will from the management to mainstream gender, but several key issues remain unresolved and these militate against all efforts meant to mainstream gender. Although the GPPC exists still there is need for some authority to spearhead the day-to-day gender mainstreaming processes in faculties and departments and sections. Second, over the years, the University has operated with no clearly defined procedures and model that assures that lecturers are prepared in readiness for gender infusion in the teaching-learning situations. Individuals are recruited and assigned classes to teach their content area. The ideal situation would be a provision of a program that ensures the integration of gender in all course contents. Third, gender education curriculum content across the

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