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**Managing gendered change in Commonwealth higher education**

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Interventions for gendered change in Commonwealth Higher Education Institutions have been initiated over at least three decades, but there are marked differences between and within different regions of the Commonwealth. Studies have been undertaken of a number of aspects of gendered change, for example women's career development (Lund, 1998) or women as higher education managers (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999) or the gendered trends in student enrolment in particular regions (UNESCO, 1995; OECD, 1999). However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no comprehensive overview of policies for gendered change, the practices that have accompanied these, and successes and failures. Moreover, scant work has been done on the theoretical frameworks which inform the published work to date.

This paper begins a process of reviewing writing in this area. It examines the nature of writing on gendered change in higher education institutions in the Commonwealth drawing on a range of meanings of the notion of 'managing' change. Firstly, the paper outlines the theoretical and historical contexts which have managed and framed gendered changes in Commonwealth higher education institutions. Secondly, the paper considers how certain themes, that cohere around mapping women's entry into management in Commonwealth universities have come to form a major component of published research in this

1.- Educación superior  
2.- Estado.

area. In this section a central aim is to examine both the areas that have been highlighted in published and semi-published research and questions that have been silenced. Thirdly, the paper examines some issues that have emerged out of practice based interventions to manage gendered change in higher education institutions in the Commonwealth. In the final section of the paper the interconnections between theory, history, policy and practice are explored. Here we also consider how the nature of scholarship relating to women as higher education managers in the Commonwealth has helped frame the disabling conditions women report and draw out some of the possibilities of a different form of research.

**Managing and framing gendered change in higher education institutions:  
Democratisation, feminism and changing global conceptions of higher  
education**

Gendered change in higher education has been implemented across the Commonwealth in a context of uneven and changing ideas about democratisation, feminism and the relationship of higher education with a global political economy. Although, as will be discussed below, the contexts of higher education institutions vary considerably in different regions, generally in all regions over the last ten years, there has been a movement to a somewhat more inclusive orientation in higher education, both with regard to students and to staff. The conditions that have driven these changes have not been uniform. Inclusivity is fuelled on the one hand by debates and concerns with democracy, accountability and citizenship, and therefore the writing about gendered change in higher education institutions can very usefully be located in relation to feminist and other radical democratic theorising concerning citizenship and justice. On the other hand, concerns about inclusion have emerged at a time of the engagement of virtually all higher

education institutions with issues of globalisation and increasing the quantity and quality of high level human resources because of economic policies concerning growth in particular sectors. In some regions greater inclusivity has been linked with expanded programmes for social development – increased concerns with schooling, housing, health, and improved economic developments for the poorest. Often the social development goals are interlinked with national and economic development, but sometimes they entail discourses of transformation. This section will look at how changing global conceptions of higher education intermesh with the ways in which equality agendas come to be framed.

Throughout the Commonwealth higher education institutions have been key organisations legitimating state authority. They fulfilled this role initially in the guise of establishing practices that equipped rulers to rule, that is inducting them into prevailing ideas of citizenship, enabling them to enact the ways in which civil, political and social rights were to be interpreted (Marshall, 1992). In this guise democracy was about distribution of rights from a government centre and higher education about equipping a limited number of individuals to carry out this distribution efficiently. Writing on Kenya, Manyà (2000) observes that the development and purpose of European universities was used as a model for those in Africa, but African universities were established to nurture an African male elite, who would make possible a politics of independence that could relate well with the concerns of Europeans.

Mwomonoh (1998) similarly describes African universities as western imports grafted on to existing societies, rather than being in a historically organic relationship with local and national communities. After independence in many countries in Africa and South Asia the purpose of higher education came to be framed in terms of national development goals or serving the community (Ade

Ajayi, et al, 1996). This did not de-stabilise older ideas concerning the role of higher education in relation to state legitimation or citizenship as inclusion. While new national governments might conceive a more pronounced role for social rights, the role of higher education remained to inculcate ideas about the origins of those rights and (what were considered) appropriate skills to ensure they were delivered. In this understanding of the link between higher education and citizenship the social identities of students and teachers were not at issue – it was enough to state that higher education was, like citizenship, potentially open to all. Moreover the content of higher education or professional training was not at issue, it was, like the democracy it was seen to be part of, an unquestioned good. An aspect of this was a form of national unity amongst elites schooled to take control of national development.

However, from the 1960s in certain areas of the Commonwealth, but accelerating in the 1990s has come the theorisation of a different conception of citizenship and hence a different guise for higher education institutions. The notion of citizenship as multilayered, radically pluralized, concerned with the recognition of multiple identities, and associated new claims for the distribution and redistribution of the rights and practices associated with citizenship, has been richly theorised (Mouffe, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Young, 1990; Young, 1997; Fraser, 1997a; Fraser, 1997b; Isin and Wood, 1999). This idea of citizenship has struggled with the older conception, not only at the level of theory, but also at the level of practice within higher education. Concerns about recognising subaltern identities (Spivak, 1995, 1999), and therefore in some ways including in the fullest sense women and other subordinated groups as students, teachers and managers have been voiced. Moreover, the nature of what is taught in higher education, the pedagogies used (hooks, 1994), the formation of the institution and the ways in which it is reproduced have all come under scrutiny. Best practice is not an unquestioned

given. Engaging with changing meanings of citizenship require new forms of understanding, particularly forms that can comprehend oppressions that literally write some groups of people out of history, economics or language.

These two contrasting ideas concerning higher education and citizenship entail two contrasting approaches to equity agendas, particularly those concerned with gender equity. On the one hand, linked to the first position, the view exists that higher education should more or less remain an elite institution transmitting higher level knowledge, and knowledge of professional practise to a select few. There might be some small expansion of numbers of students and of particular kinds of students, for example women or groups defined by race or ethnicity, but the notion of a particular 'body of knowledge' to be transmitted to an elite 'student body' who are charged with ensuring access to and participation in the 'body politic' by the many who are not included in higher education, has not changed in many countries. In this context gender equity agendas come to be framed in terms of counting women in. This literally entails counting as, as we will discuss below, much of the work in support of this approach is statistical in nature. Women are included as students, teachers or managers, but the different forms of knowledge or practice, they or any similarly subordinated group might bring, is not given epistemic recognition. Gender equity is on set institutional terms. Power is not redistributed, even though the potential space for access to power might have been widened. By contrast in a context where radical notions of democracy have had an impact on higher education the equity agenda is about transforming institutional power relationships, often taking account of feminist scholarship on the gendered formations and governance of institutions. It is about examining the legitimacy given to certain knowledges, taking on board the feminist critique concerning selections from knowledge, and of scrutinising pedagogy for the power relations it carries.

On one level the first position is the more limited transformatory project, concerned with gender equity only within set frameworks. It is concerned with women, not gender inequalities or feminism as theory or political practice. The second approach, because of its radical agendas of recognition, promises a more thoroughgoing transformation of gendered relations in the institution and the society. However, we have too few detailed institutional studies, or studies of policy change in practice over a long-term to conclude this. Indeed a potent debate within feminist scholarship on democracy considers whether conferring recognition of subaltern identities, for example through curriculum change in higher education, is in and of itself an adequate expansion of rights. If this is not at the same time accompanied with a redistribution of power and particularly political and economic power in a society it may be a hollow form of 'multiculturalism' or token and limited recognition of gender inequality (Fraser, 1997a and b; Young, 1990, 1997; Phillips, 1997). Furthermore, change needs to focus on social transformation, rather than on cognitive restructuring and self-efficacy (Gore, 1993; Morley, 1998).

Possibly a more thoroughgoing shift in gendered and other inequalities and injustices can take place only through a combination of the two positions. Some of the enlarged forms of access, associated with the first position can entail increased distribution of economic, political and cultural powers. Increased access alone cannot effect this, but this increased access is a necessary if not a *sufficient condition for gendered change*. A radical critical view of issues concerning curriculum and pedagogy and institutional organisation, associated with the second position, can transform subordinated identities. But it cannot do this in and of itself without political, economic and institutional conditions that support and make these changes legitimate and sustainable. To date struggles

for gender equity have tended to cluster either at the pole of issues concerning access, or at the pole of issues concerning recognition. Both concern the potential to effect changes in power. One of the questions we will be examining in our review of policy and practice is the extent to which transformations in gendered power relations in higher education make use of one strategy or another, or a combination of the two.

The equality agendas in higher education institutions in the Commonwealth, while generally powerfully framed in terms of perceptions of national interest – be this national interest for economic advancement or national development – cannot be interpreted without recognising the influence of global or international formations. We have identified three periods of global political economy that each shape equality agendas in Commonwealth universities into a particular formation. The first period runs from approximately the mid 1960s to the onset of the debt crisis in the early 1980s. This period sees the emergence of many Commonwealth universities oriented to inculcating ideas of stewardship by the professional elites on behalf of citizens. In this period universities were concerned with teaching students how to minimise the effects of inequalities, which were seen to lie outside the institution. Thus for example Mwomonoh (1998) points out how in Africa the university was seen as the pinnacle of the educational pyramid, pursuing, promoting and disseminating useful knowledge, conducting research, developing technologies, promoting regional and international understanding, producing high-level human power, stimulating economic growth and preserving and developing culture and heritage. In this guise a social function of universities was to bring together in limited numbers men and women from different regions, ethnicity, social and religious backgrounds (Mwomonoh, 1998). Professionalism amongst the elites was seen as an element to ensure that they did not represent any one particular interest group, linked to essentialised identities.

A number of radical commentators looking back on this history have pointed to the complicity of these professionals with the widening of poverty and inequality. For example in Papua New Guinea, universities are described by Nagai (2000) as the pinnacle of the education system that served European purposes imposing notions of superiority and inferiority. This included assimilating or rejecting indigenous people. Similar points are made about Tanzania by Brock-Utne (2000). Neither of these accounts draw out the gender dimensions of these boundaries between professionals and 'ordinary people'.

But these critiques have been made in retrospect. In the immediate post independence period a host of international institutions, associated with the United Nations organisations, international faith organisations, and bodies like the Commonwealth Secretariat regarded Commonwealth higher education institutions as the unproblematic source for professionals to tackle inequality outside their walls. Thus this formation of the global maintained and helped keep in place a particular construction of higher education only minimally transforming itself.

The second period runs from approximately the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s. This period, marked by neo-liberal economics and dramatically increasing levels of poverty was also the period of the emergence of identity politics, linked to subordinated identities in multi-ethnic cities and many resurgent struggles of national liberation. Many groups, talking on behalf of the subordinated, made international connections and strategies to tackle inequalities within institutions, like higher education or large-scale NGOs were discussed in global conferences, or through global networks. In this period there were some attempts within some higher education institutions to take on board some of the critiques of curriculum,



pedagogy and admission procedures raised by some proponents of identity politics. Some results of these strategies were the reserved places, or quota systems for women and scheduled castes in Indian universities, for Malay students in Malaysia, or the improved access to higher education through special programmes for working class undergraduates or for indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand or Canada.

But the extent to which these initiatives entailed a thoroughgoing overhaul of the institution was extremely limited given the prevailing orthodoxies in that period about higher education linked to skill formation and national competitiveness. Thus the prevailing view of the global as a giant competitive marketplace limited the scope of higher education institutions for large-scale transformation. Surveying African universities generally in the early 1990s, Ade Ajayi et al (1996) saw these as bastions of knowledge, guardians of the future and an indispensable tool of development. However, the point was made that most of the leaders of these institutions were male and did not see gender parity, as opposed to say national development, as an issue. Mullei (1995) drew on liberal education as well as supply-side economics to describe the purpose of Kenyan universities. They are seen as the legitimate source of senior manpower (*sic*) and increasingly as the site for cultivating intellectualism. The latter is not gendered, or indeed racialised. This view of the university, therefore does not imply any need to foreground concerns with gender equality, except possibly at the level of numbers.

Makhubu (1998) writing about the history of the university in Swaziland points out how it was seen as a means by which social mobility could be achieved, and in this way become a cornerstone of national development. Makhubu (1998) makes the point that African universities have been shaped by factors such as the nature of their ancient institutions and western approaches introduced during

colonialism. Historical accounts of ancient African universities make no reference to women. Commenting on social mobility, she makes the point that education generally is seen as the mean by which aspirations may be met. She believes that modern universities have become the cornerstones of nation building. However, once again, there is implicit consensus about shared values and objectives involved in nation-building (Gray, 1999). It suggests that men and women's interests are equally represented and that this is a politically neutral process.

By contrast Barry's work (1995) explicitly links the purpose of the university to equity and social responsibility. She uses the Freirian language of critical pedagogy alongside the notion of remediation for women. She describes how, in Guinea, the university is also seen as a way to nation build. However, she adds that it should also reduce inequality and generally bring about improvements in society. Interventions for gendered change are sometimes cited. In Guinea, plans for increasing women's participation include, encouraging research, granting scholarships and fellowships, conscientization, and 'extra help for females'. While the concepts of repair and redress go some way to recognising women's inequality, they also imply that it is the women, rather than the organisations that need to change (Edwards, 1993).

The very limited transformations undertaken within particular universities, were not unconnected with low levels of international concern with higher education in this period. Generally international government organisations in the period became concerned with either implementing or opposing structural adjustment policies; basic education was a major area of focus. Thus concern with conditions outside the university walls meant that there were few powerful international actors promoting change in higher education.

The third period is roughly from the mid 1990s to the present. The era of globalisation and the end of the cold war and the often fragile nature of economic growth in many regions, has seen the emergence of concern in international organisations with the slow pace of social change since World War 2, particularly in certain regions of the world where inequity has increased. Universities, or certain approaches, for example to health or democracy, which had been viewed as unproblematic merely requiring more energy or resources to make them happen, have come to be seen as deeply problematic, possibly contributing to maintaining inequalities not simply ending them.

The increase in networking through ICT has meant a widespread circulation of this pessimism or critical stance. But there has also been a widespread exchange of ideas concerning good practice to challenge inequities in institutions, including higher education, through the many formations of interest group that have emerged, many modelled on the identity groupings of the previous era. In this period the notion of the global is both a threat – of competition of declining state sovereignty - but also an opportunity for access to new ideas, new contacts, new international resources and new forms of solidarity through international declarations. Thus for example the UNESCO hosted the first World Conference on Higher Education in Paris in 1998. Representatives of 182 countries endorsed *the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty First Century: Vision and Action* with its commitment to in depth reform of higher education throughout the world. Gender reform is ranked particularly prominently here (UNESCO, 1998). The UNESCO conference had been preceded by concern within the Commonwealth on this issue. The under-representation of women in Commonwealth universities was seen by the Commonwealth Secretariat as one

the most important issues facing universities (1994). It was perceived as a human rights issue.

While a number of critical studies consider these international declarations as difficult to implement partly because of institutional politics (Manya, 2000; Morley, 1999; Kamoruao-Mbuende, 1999), and others point to some of the problematic formulations that emerge when a deconstruction of the discourse surrounding these declarations is undertaken (Unterhalter, 2000) it is undoubtedly the case that the international concern with equity and rights is a welcome development, opening the way for a deepening of democracy. It is in this context that new forms of scholarship looking critically at higher education as institutions, possibly complicit with inequity, but also with the potential to change, have emerged.

This section has shown the notion of the purpose of the university as contested in different periods and in different regions of the Commonwealth. On the one hand the university has been viewed as ungendered, a site for knowledge to serve national interests and ungendered notions of citizenship. In this guise it is open to primarily quantitative change with regard to including certain formerly excluded groups. On the other hand, the university may be viewed as an institution complicit with the social divisions of the society, but nonetheless open to qualitative change and transformations concerning gendered and other forms of inequity. Changing formations of the global have had an influence both on notions of the purpose of the university and on approaches to change. From the point of view of Commonwealth universities global forces have been seen as the midwife of national (ungendered) institutions, a threat promoting forms of social inclusion to promote competitiveness, and a critical friend in the task of transformation. In the next section we consider writings on gendered change in the Commonwealth,

paying attention to what themes have emerged, and which areas have been silenced.

### **Writings on gender and higher education in the Commonwealth**

Interesting research has been conducted over some decades on the history and purposes of universities in the Commonwealth, but the gendered dimensions the history of nation building, and how universities engage with this has barely been examined. In addition the gendered nature of the labour market and its relation to educational capital has not been explored, nor has the gendered dimension of the stigmatising of indigenous knowledges. What has been more frequently discussed has been the presence or absence of women as students or in positions of leadership. Indeed a major theme in the literature on gender and management in higher education is the question of numbers.

#### **The question of numbers**

Much of the analysis of gender and management in higher education is concerned with counting and looking at the proportion of women in certain positions and the implications of this distribution for women's career development. Gender equity is frequently reduced to strategies for transforming quantitative representation and participation, rather than an engagement with processes, power and dominant values. Hence, a key indicator of gender equality is often posed in numerical terms

Opportunities for women as academics and administrators have concerned several writers in the Commonwealth. Writing nearly ten years ago Park (1992: 237) concluded that:

University women are about three times less likely to be professors than men when age and publication rate are taken into account.

In Sri Lanka, nearly a decade later Kalungama (1999) noted that women are concentrated in humanities and social sciences and that they occupy middle management rather than senior management roles. In 1991 they were 30% of the teaching staff in universities (37% of assistant lecturers), but only 13% of professors and associate professors. At Ruhuna, women constitute 39% of the academic staff, 69% of women are in junior level positions, 31% at senior lecturer and above, representation at senate and the council are 16.3% and 18% respectively. 37% of the female respondents said they had been overlooked for promotion. There was no perceived difference in salary between men and women although there are differences in other financial benefits. In terms of obtaining further qualifications 88% of women indicated difficulties compared with 45% of men.

Women's engagement and entry into research was seen as a crucial stage in academic career development. In South Africa Ndugane (1998/9) notes that, despite the fact that race and gender were areas that the government was keen to address, the situation has not changed much since 1990. Research activities are central to selection, promotion and institutional status. In 1993 historically white universities employed 51% of permanently employed teaching and research staff, produced 83% of research articles and 81% of all masters and doctorate graduates. Some historically black institutions have developed research interests in areas such as outreach and basic community needs. In 1996 34% of instruction and research fellows were women. Universities accounted for 79%. Historically white institutions (HWI) employed 57% of the women. Technikons, then historically black institutions (HBI) had a higher percentage of women than

historically white institutions. In distance institutions women formed 50% of the professional staff, whilst at residential ones they formed around 33% (this is the biggest percentage difference between institutions). In technikons there was a higher percentage of women professionals than in historically black institutions and in historically white. In terms of permanent positions white women were 85.5%, black women 80.6%, in the age group 45-54 there was 92.2% permanent employment, in those aged 25 and below 35.7%. 26% of white women had PhDs but only 7.6% of black women.

Manya (2000) records how, at the University of Nairobi women account for 7.1% of professors, 21% of chief officers, 3 female deans, no female directors, registrars or finance officers. There is no clear scheme for advancement for administrators in middle management. Often these are entry-level positions. The university seems unaware that the lack of female representation in management is an issue that needs to be addressed despite the fact that many studies have reached this conclusion. In another Kenyan university, Onsongo (2000) notes how women are not represented in the professorial grade; they form 1.8% of assistant professors, 22.8% of senior lecturers and 47% of lecturers. They are concentrated at the lecturer grade and below.

In certain locations, women might be entering the academy as students, but not as academics or managers. Makehubu (1998) observes how Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland have comparable ratios in female enrolment with those in Latin American universities, yet this is not carried through to female advancement or promotion. Singh (2001) indicates that today in Malaysia, there are more women undergraduates than men, and that women are entering the academy in lecturing posts. However, they are not achieving higher levels of academic management and leadership.

There are some significant trends across the Commonwealth. Lund (1998) saw that there is no real difference between high-income countries and low and middle-income countries in the percentages of full time academic staff employed. This is particularly so at the top of the hierarchy. For example, Barry (1995) described how, in Guinea women are underrepresented and their numbers are in decline. As lecturers they represent 5% of the teaching staff. There are no professors and only one female associate professor. In Nigeria, women form 18% (1989-0) of the total staff population of federal universities, 9% of academic staff (Mbanefoh, 1995).

There is horizontal and vertical segregation in the academy on a fairly global scale. At the University of Cape Coast, Ghana women form 8.5% of academia. They are absent from all professorial grades in all faculties, and concentrated in the education faculty. In the University of Ghana women constitute 20.6% of the working population and are 3.4% of professors. In the University College of Education of Winneba-women form 13.64% of teaching staff. Generally women are concentrated in the care-giving and service areas. It also here that sexual harassment thrives. All these studies point up that women are a minority in the areas in higher education where power is exercised and decisions are taken. What accounts for this?

### **Accounting for the gender division of labour in higher education**

Many studies go beyond merely noting these inequalities and pose the question as to why there are no women in senior positions. In Onsongo's study (2000) 69% of women and 92% of men felt encouraged to apply for promotion. The sources of encouragement for men and women are different. Women rely on heads of



departments whilst men are able to garner support from heads of departments, senior colleagues and family and friends. This could be related to socialisation, with career ambition considered 'unfeminine', i.e. it is greedy, pushy, individualistic and competitive. In other words, it is agentic, rather than communal behaviour (Miller, 1976). Onsongo discusses structural and psychological barriers to women's advancement. She raises the issue of the gendering of confidence and women's psychic narratives, noting that organisational culture seems to dictate that one does not apply for promotion until one thinks it is due. This raises the question of how confident female staff feel. In Onsongo's Kenyan university 21.4% of men applied for promotion even though they did not meet the criteria.

Singh (2000) offers three categories of explanation for the lack of women in management positions: person centred relating to psycho-social attributes; structure centred focusing on the social structure; culture centred which links gender and organisational structure. She argues that gender roles are carried into the workplace.

A number of studies question the nature of the gendered division of labour in higher education. The career pathways open for women academics often worked against their promotion prospects. For example teaching was seen as compatible with female socialisation. While research and the conditions of labour that accompany it were not. Lamptey (1992) points out that, in Ghana, contrary to expectations most women reported that they did not face discrimination, but could not advance because of the multiple roles that they perform. Teaching was perceived as compatible with traditional female roles but not research. This was seen as insecure in terms of funding and requiring fieldwork which would not be compatible with the roles of wife and mother. It is worth noting that many of the

explanations of women's under-representation are posed utilising norm related discourses of heterosexuality.

While many women do not rise to leadership positions, those who do face many forms of discrimination. Questions have been raised internationally about women's access to and engagement with power within hierarchical structures (Marshall, 1995; Morley, 1999). The subjects of women in leadership, gender and the professions and women in management have been researched for several decades (Barnard, 1964; Dudovitz, 1983; Omar, 1995; Tanton, 1994). However, there is also qualitative lack, with women in leadership positions being perceived as impostors, second-rate and fraudulent (McIntosh, 1985; Morley, 1999).

Leadership is a concept that is often intertwined with the purpose of the university. In their (1993) report, the Commonwealth Secretariat claimed that the university is seen as the historical training ground for society's leaders - a pinnacle of manpower (sic) planning. The use of gendered language here suggests that gender sensitivity is rather partial and incomplete, and that leadership is inevitably linked with masculinities. It is also profoundly linked to social class and racialised privilege. Namibia is relatively progressive in Africa in terms of the proportion of women in parliament and government. However, Kamoruao-Mbuende (1999) makes the point that female professors in Namibia are all either white or other black nationals. So, it is important to ask which women are occupying leadership positions.

It can be seen that the reasons for the absence of women from management positions are related to structure and agency, but that many more studies stress women's failures to advance themselves rather than institutional failures to address equality agendas. However some studies exist of holistic strategies to address gender equity that do not go for a 'single fix'. Mlama (1998) considers the

pro gender balance interventions that have been tried e.g. affirmative action which has increased participation in Tanzania by 13%. These include the introduction of gender studies, women's studies, women in education, a gender management committee, and the gender dimension task force. The point is made that the socio-economic crisis that the country faces is creating an environment that is not conducive to human development. The impact of this crisis is hitting women and girls disproportionately. The author also raises the issue of social and 'cultural degeneracy', increasing individualistic tendencies and sexual harassment which exists despite the existence of by-laws and disciplinary measures. Mlamba claims that despite the long history of gender initiatives the situation is poor. Sexual harassment is rife on campus, and, is increasingly being used to silence students and academics. Several authors noted sexual harassment, with some authors making the case for policy to be developed in specific areas such as sexual harassment.

This subsection has identified some of the ways in which the gender division of labour in higher education has been analysed in writings across the Commonwealth. In the next section we look at the nature of writing on what is seen to be a crucial area for institutional transformation – that of higher education management.

### **Women's work in education management**

Women's work as managers in higher education remains under researched, although key studies have been undertaken by Rosemary Deem and Jenny Ozga (2000). Tete-Menseh (1998/9) believes that, in Ghana, the implication is that in the interests of equity more women should be in management positions, this would also strengthen their collective position and be a catalyst for change. However

there are no studies of the handful of women in these positions. Manya (2000) suggests women are perceived as possessing potentially new management styles of use to higher education. Gill (2000) also explores gendered communication skills that could be useful as management tools. While gender socialisation can produce different interpersonal approaches, Gill points out that this is not inevitably the case for all women. However there is a tendency for this line of argument to be deployed by some writers to suggest that women innately possess more interactive, nurturing skills, and that women are a homogenous group. There are clearly problems with this form of essentialising analysis.

Lamptey (1992) tells how, in Ghana, women are perceived as lacking in the social skills and personality traits that make up an effective manager. The model is male biased. However, she believes that this situation seems to be changing as the manager's role expands to encompass elements such as good interpersonal skills and intuitive capabilities previously considered feminine.

It is debatable whether women managers are necessarily gender sensitive or politically committed to representing women's interests. Manya (2000) notes that despite the fact that the University in her Kenyan study employs many of the country's leading advocates of gender equity (in the political and public sector), they are not vocal about the position of women within the university.

Some authors report anti-feminist backlash, often without any analysis. Ade Ajayi (1996) suggests that the earliest gender interventions (research and teaching) were made by 'female militant types' and has thus been condemned and restricted to an 'intellectual ghetto'. This expresses some of the negative perceptions of women in the university community generally. It is interesting that the study does

not seek to dispute this assumption. The implication is that it is reasonable, and offers some explanatory power for women's marginalisation in the academy.

The Commonwealth Secretariat collection (1993) detected variation in perceptions. Some see women as the same as men and use this as an argument for them to be treated in the same way. Others refer to the special qualities of women as human beings, which translates into a very different management style, which if encouraged will have a positive developmental effect on management generally. The issue of gender-free cultural capital was raised. Nearly all of the authors report that women see their qualifications as the major factor contributing to their appointment.

Mbanefoh (1995) mentions the lonely position women find they are in once they have achieved management status in a patriarchal system in Nigeria. In Australia, too, Ramsey (2000) argues that women managers may be good for the university, but the university is not always good for the women. She believes that women provide a new vitality and approach to problems. However, they are also more isolated and continually establishing and re-establishing their position. In the UK, De Groot (1997) claims that alienation, anxiety and accountability characterise academic work both generally and in a gender-specific way.

Seniority implies visibility that can be dangerous for women who have been socialised into not drawing attention to themselves, their bodies, their femaleness. The visibility of women in patriarchal institutions is especially complex. Power is everywhere in the academy, in everyday transactions, coalitions, exclusions and networks. Gendered power is often subtle and difficult to capture. One area where it is tangible is sexual harassment. This was frequently cited as an explanatory factor for women's silence and reluctance to make themselves visible in the

academy. In Zimbabwe, Zindi's study (1998) recorded that every respondent knew lecturers sexually exploiting female students. But 93% said that they would not report sexual harassment.

Many women chose not to enter management. Onsongo (2000) suggests that women engage in more collaborative projects for which there is generally less status, compared to writing and publishing. They are more concerned to share knowledge and improve their teaching and contact skills.

In 1994 the Pacific Women's Charter was an outcome of the Pacific Workshop for Women Managers held in Fiji. The aims included: helping women managers function more effectively; equipping them with strategies and resources to help them influence organisational change; providing them with a basis for ongoing co-operative affirmative action; and creating a network of continuing support for women in the Pacific region. This initiative, regionally located, with a specific strategy for gaining resources, not just personal advancement for individual women, makes it a unique initiative in the Commonwealth thus far.

It can be seen that what writing exists on women's aspirations for management positions and work at this level stress how difficulties with the gendered nature of the institution are not overcome as women move up the career ladder. Indeed the token inclusion of women as managers accompanied by the absence of feminist politics may stand in the way of more profound transformations from occurring.

### **Sounds and silences**

The writing we have reviewed highlights some of the quantitative and qualitative features of women's exclusion from management in higher education, or some of

the disabling terms on which women have been included. Generally, the literature has tended to locate problems, and therefore solutions, within institutions paying less attention to the highly discriminatory societies in which HEIs are located. This has led to some perplexing silences and assumptions.

Many of the studies we analysed, while sometimes demonstrating an engagement with liberal feminism and the need to bring women into senior positions, tended to perpetuate hegemonic, normative constructions of women and families. Sexual orientation was not mentioned and heterosexuality was an implicit assumption, as in the analysis that it was women's 'family responsibilities' that might account for discrimination.

Moreover, there was little discussion of violence and sexual harassment as a feature of women's exclusion from management. Sexual harassment seems widespread in Commonwealth universities although the majority of studies of this focus on students' experiences (Zindi, 1998). This silences and disempowers women. It problematises women's bodies and sexuality in organisations traditionally dedicated to the life of the mind and the pursuit of abstract knowledge. There are many contradictions and complexities here. While women in Africa express outrage at sexual harassment, some also feel that the vocabularies for naming these negative experiences are western.

In many of the studies we analysed, only women are gendered. Black and white women, indigenous and exogenous, ruling and working class women are oppositionally positioned with men in the struggle to access opportunities. Men and masculinities are rarely problematised, or perceived in need of development and training. Furthermore, gendered differences are sometimes essentialised and placed within a normative framework. Sometimes a social constructionist

approach is taken, particularly in relation to women's career development. Career progress, ambition and self-interest are seen as 'unfeminine' as they imply desire, greed and attention to the self (Walkerdine, 1990). References have been made obliquely to collective versus the individual or agentic v communal approaches- (reminiscent of Jean Baker Miller, 1976). However, there are still many essentialised observations about women managers' qualities and preferred styles of working (Lamprey, 1992). Different explanatory narratives for women's under-representation have been offered e.g. domestic responsibilities, structural discrimination, lack of mobility. They all assume particular heterosexual, 'mainstream' lifestyles for women.

The lack of sustained qualitative data in virtually all the studies analysed means that the complexities of alienating organisational cultures are not always recorded. There are major issues about the gendering of research opportunities. Many of these studies, while pointing to important areas for future work were unfunded, lone researcher investigations (Wenneros, and Wold, 1997). There is an urgent need for studies in micropolitics, the hidden curriculum, networks and homosociality, giving epistemic privilege to women's voices in Commonwealth universities. We return to this point in the final section.

We now briefly want to consider some of the themes that have emerged from this review of literature in relation to issues women have raised in workshops organised to address improved access to management positions. In the following section we draw on reflections on ACU co sponsored workshops that have been held in a number of regions of the Commonwealth to draw out some of the resonances between research and practice.



## **Gendered change in higher education management: some issues arising from practice**

Since 1995 the ACU has co-sponsored workshops in which international groups of resource people have introduced ACU and CHES commissioned modules for the Management Development programme for Women in Management in Higher Education. In the workshops, the participants are taken through several modules and given the opportunity to decide how they might contextualise and use the material in their own institutions. They may reject some modules or parts of modules, or they may adopt or adapt them, and they are given the opportunity within the workshops to make plans about taking the materials and concrete strategies for introduction back home with them. In taking people through the modules, the resource people try to incorporate as much experiential learning as possible by working through several of the activities described in the modules. By early 2001 eight workshops had taken place in a number of low and middle income countries of the Commonwealth.

Nearly all the themes from the workshops, drawn out both by the ACU materials and by the ensuing discussions, seem to be connected by the need to understand, or read, power relations in the academy. Participants are frequently disempowered by the gendered micropolitics of their organisations, that is, how power is relayed in everyday transactions, such as networks, gossips, coalitions, exclusions, humour, 'throwaway remarks' (Morley, 1999). Gender inequalities in their societies are compounded for them in the institution. There are social class issues as, materially, they have achieved a great deal by comparison with many other women. Participants are offered ways of reading the inequalities and then of developing strategies (and supportive networks) to challenge them.

The most recent workshop took place in the Caribbean in January 2001. Many of the discussions echoed the previous workshops. On the evidence of the participants in the workshops power relations in HEIs seem to be played out particularly around three themes that have been noted in the review of literature (above)

- The pressures women feel regarding balancing what are seen as their 'personal' relationships and professional work;
- The difficulties women experience in negotiating a balance between teaching and researching;
- The importance of networks for women in the academy.

In addition two themes emerged from the workshops that have been under researched, namely :

- The nature of mentoring relationships
- Difficulties women entering management experience with regard to conflict resolution

It can be seen that the gender division of labour in HEIs is experienced by women as a problem compounded by gendered social identities. The workshops give evidence of the limits on inclusivity and redistribution of resources to women in HEIs.

In many of the workshops, a homogenised view of women academics as married and with young children has been the dominant one. In the Caribbean workshop it was clear that although many of the women were single and did not have children, this homogenised image was seen as normative and dominant. However, all the

women present were responsible for their own well-being, feeding, clothing and cleaning, and several had dependants for whom they had the main responsibility including elderly relatives and children in an extended family.

Most women there expressed difficulty in balancing their lives. Their main trouble was their sense that all of the demands made on them were non-negotiable - they were powerless to renegotiate or to be productive in both spheres at once. The workshops highlighted how networks of women in the institution can help to maintain support, and may empower women while they negotiate for the work load distribution they prefer. National and international networks have grown out of previous ACU workshops. Given that many of the existing invisible decision-making routes are supported by informal and hidden patriarchal networks, how ethical is it of women to belong to and use networks themselves in order to redress age-old power balances? .

These three themes that emerged from the workshops are all borne out by writing surveyed in the preceding section of the paper. However, another group of issues emerged from the workshops that have not been much commented on in published and semi-published literature: Firstly, the issue of how women in management in Higher Education deal with conflict resolution. A second area awaiting in depth research concerns mentoring relationships. There was an intriguing lack of consensus among the women who attended the workshops on the definition of a mentor (Eliasson et al., 2000). Institutions of Higher Education are patriarchal organisations, and so mentors are more likely to be male than female (Eliasson et al. 2000). It is important in this work to help participants to read the power relations which contribute to effective and ineffective mentoring, and to develop accessible strategies to maintain the relationship or to explain why if it breaks down.

The ACU workshops are an example of only one intervention for gender change in Commonwealth universities. Some common themes may be found both in the published literature surveyed and in the issues that have emerged from the ACU workshops. Firstly these concern securing women's access to and success with regard to promotion and work in management. Secondly, very little of the literature, and none of the reports from the workshops consider gender equity and its intersections with other anti-discriminatory policies – for example with regard to ethnicity, race, class, sexuality or disability. Thirdly, little of the literature and none of the workshop reports problematise constructions of the family and how women academics come to be situated in relation to these constructions, both inside and outside work. Fourthly, there appears to be a way in which this literature writes about generic management, so that different aspects of management or work in higher education – be it policy, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, or research all tend to be homogenised and seen as subjected to similar management regimes, and amenable to similar forms of solution. Lastly, there is a tendency in much of the published work and the workshops to consider wider political, economic and cultural forces framing debates about management and higher education as a general backdrop – out there – not a real setting where real material and cultural resources can be struggled over and acquired.

To a large extent the issues that arose in the workshops concern problems of putting into practice a transformative politics for gendered change in higher education institutions. However, many of the sounds and silences identified in the published and semi-published literature recur in similar form in the perceptions women bring to the workshops. In this concluding section we consider the links between theory, history, policy and practice as a means to understand gendered change in Commonwealth higher education.

## **Theory, history, policy and practice in gendered change in Commonwealth higher education**

The theoretical tension evident in the literature on rights and citizenship can be seen to be exemplified in different approaches to managing gendered change in higher education in the Commonwealth. On the one hand theorising citizenship as static and inclusive entails expanding access to higher education, while keeping the modalities of pedagogy and governance largely the same, and not radically questioning the basis of knowledge formation. This has been the route followed by the majority of universities in all three periods identified but in different ways. In each period formations of the global have (for different reasons) assisted this institutional formation and the modest adjustments it entails. The power of this approach is echoed in the published and semi-published literature and in the practice of women who aspire to be managers. It is women and other subordinated groups who must accommodate the institution, learn its rules and survive its regimes.

On the other hand radical plural conceptions of citizenship entail not only expanding access to higher education, but facilitating profound contestations concerning modalities of pedagogy and governance, and in depth questionings of epistemic privileging and the politics of knowledge production. While new global networks are emerging to facilitate this, very little of the effects of their work are documented. Indeed very little research on these processes for transformation exist, and many experiences, like sexual harassment, that indicate the nature of the struggles for transformation in HEIs are barely documented.

From whichever theoretical framework one works one important resource women working for gendered change in the management of higher education in the Commonwealth have not yet acquired is a depth of research from which strategic work at local, regional, national and international levels can grow. We have observed how literature on gendered change in higher education frequently focuses on the west, the north or rich OECD countries as a site for research and analysis. Studies of gender in the third world often seemed to exist as 'grey' literature, that is conference and seminar papers or unpublished dissertations. This is data in itself- raising questions about publication opportunities for third world women and structural and intrapersonal barriers that prevent material from moving into a global public domain. A central question is whether knowledge creation around gender in higher education is being suppressed.

This may be by default rather than by design. While gender is a key policy factor articulated by donor agencies and in international conventions such as Jomtien and Beijing, it is usually in conjunction with basic education, rather than higher education. There is almost a hierarchy of needs approach, with higher education being perceived at the 'luxury' end of the educational market. Brock-Utne (2000) points out that post Jomtien funding agencies have been encouraged to focus on basic education as this is where the greatest returns to education, and the greatest educational need is perceived to be. This has had the effect of shifting attention from higher education. The lack of funding opportunities for research on gender and higher education is having a serious impact on knowledge production and dissemination, scholarship and literature in the field.

The review of writings and actions above highlights a number of questions and areas for future research. There are different discourses justifying change to be found in most accounts: affirmative action; repairing damage / injuries to women;

equal opportunities and mainstreaming gender. The different histories and implications of these different discourses tend not to be examined, but very interesting and in depth understandings could flow from such accounts. Gender also tends not to be intersected with race, ethnicity, disability, class and caste, or sexuality. Much of the work done to date focuses on descriptive statistics of women and men in certain levels in the organisation. While this gives some outline account of institutions, there is very little work that utilises statistics to look at intersecting inequalities, or to track longitudinal processes. Complex accounts of institutions, the formations of inequality and the ways in which complex social processes affect strategies for change remain to be told.

Generally, while a number of interesting institutional studies have been completed, these tend to be snapshots in time. There is very little historical work or studies of institutions changing over a reasonably long period of time. This long view would allow the many complexities of the processes entailed to be examined.

Lastly, it is assumed by many writers, workshop participants and development assistance agencies that gendered change entails understanding women constructed within a norm referenced framework. There are silences about masculinities, and the implications the forms masculinity takes for initiatives to change higher education.

We have tried to outline some intersections between theory, history, politics and practice in understanding the nature of gendered change in higher education, looking particularly at the ways in which there have been both openings and closures. We have been concerned to draw out how a politics of research and theory interfaces between policy and practice. We share an aspiration for higher education in the Commonwealth to be more equitable and democratic. In our view

this cannot happen without expanded access and larger resources. A particular need exists for resources for research on gendered change. But as long as this research remains at the level of counting women in the ways in which inclusion might be transformatory will go un-noticed. Concomitantly, as long as transformation remains an idea at the level of theory, the ways in which it can be put into practice will be unknown. Unless there is an important shift in approaches to research and publication in the Commonwealth the aspirations in the UNESCO Declaration will be met in only a limited and circumscribed form. This will be a numerical gendered change that will be 'managed', that is (minimally) achieved, but not 'managed' in the sense of maximally exploring all possibilities for change.



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