

# Gender Mainstreaming in the University of Botswana's Structures: The Case of Faltering Commitment (II)

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## ABSTRACT

*The study adopts the survey research design to assess the efforts of the University of Botswana (UB) to the issue of gender in its critical structures in accordance with its Gender Policy and Programs Committee (GPPC) and Botswana's National Gender Program Framework. The data generated for this study were sourced from both the primary and secondary sources. Components of the National Gender Machinery for Botswana made up the secondary source while personal observation as a gender trainer and member of the GPPC constituted the primary source. The data were analysed using simple percentage and frequency counts. Based on the findings, though commendable policy and programmatic efforts are made to mainstream gender in UB, yet there is no passion and zeal for its implementation. Hence, the implementation of lofty programmes and policies of this institution should be taken seriously by the appropriate sectors of the institution. This will ensure that all policies and programmes put in place are implemented for a qualitative learning environment.*

**Keywords:** *Gender mainstreaming, gender management structures, gender equality, faltering commitment*

## INTRODUCTION

In absolute term, human beings exist in pairs right from the beginning of the universe. Out of the dust of the earth, God created the first man. Having seen the need for man not to live alone, He created for him a woman. Notwithstanding the great benevolence of God upon human beings, greediness, ostentation to mention a few have made gender to be an issue of contention. It has given rise to a situation where people seek the equality of man and woman. However, one should not lose sight of the fact that naturally, these two entities are not equal. Nevertheless, though each person, man or woman has the right to be respected as an individual, yet equating a man with a woman violates natural authority. This position does not however in any way subscribe to depriving a woman of any privilege, be it in religion, politics, sport, occupation, employment, decision making, education and every other sphere of life that a woman is willing to participate. Participation should be a thing of willingness than gender segregation. With this in focus, there is need for mainstreaming of gender issues. Hence, gender mainstreaming is a

process by which the values and principles that foster gender equality and equity are systematically infused and entrenched in all aspects of organizational culture such as policies, programmes, projects, rules, leadership and management styles, staff recruitment procedures, appointments and promotions, terms and conditions of employment, disciplinary measures, staff development and conflict resolution strategies and processes (Raditlhokwa, 2010). For these to be achieved, there should be well coordinated Gender Management Structure (GMS) which involves:

*The network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organizational framework to guide, plan, monitor and evaluate the mainstreaming of gender into all areas of the organizations' work in order to achieve greater equality and equity within the context of sustainable development... (Government of Botswana and UNDP, 1999:134).*

What is advocated as gender equality or equity is not that men are practically and physically equal to women. The connotation is that women should be given equal opportunity to participate in the affairs of life, as they are part of life. Women should not be deprived of opportunity to contribute in decision making because they are women. It does not for instance mean that if the staff strength of a university is one hundred, women and men share equal proportion of 50:50 as most often speculated by a lot of people. It is a question of giving women a fair opportunity to showcase their God given potentialities.

The 1996 Women in Development Policy for Botswana regards gender mainstreaming as a vital activity in the gender empowerment process. Hence, in 2002-2003, the Government through the Women's Affairs Department carried out a Gender Mainstreaming Pilot exercises in four ministries of (i) Labour and Home Affairs, (ii) Finance and Development Planning, (iii) Trade and Industry, and (iv) Local Government. During the workshop on "Leadership, Gender Mainstreaming, Tackling HIV/AIDS and Poverty", held in early July 2006 in Gaborone, the then Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Moeng Pheto proclaimed that the gender mainstreaming exercise undertaken in government ministries was meant to double women's participation in political and decision making bodies (Nyirenda, 2006).

Gender mainstreaming, if taken seriously, can bring about concrete changes and ensure that gender considerations are fully integrated in development policies, programs and the activities of organizations (Taylor, 1999). University of Botswana as a higher institution of learning significantly contributes intellectual leadership and technical skills to support gender training and other gender equality initiatives in the country (Raditlhokwa, 2010). In an attempt to mainstreaming gender in University Structures, the University of Botswana has set up Gender Policy and

Programs Committee. The GPPC, whose membership includes numerous organs on campus and some collaborating agencies out of campus, was set up by the University of Botswana Senate on May 2, 1991 to spearhead gender mainstreaming. It is guided by the following Terms of Reference:

- i. To monitor and develop university policy on gender issues;
- ii. To promote and support gender awareness and sensitivity in teaching and research;
- iii. To monitor the university's institutional performance in relation to gender issues;
- iv. To promote staff development in the field of gender studies and research;
- v. To maintain ties with related activities outside the university;
- vi. To advise on the development of links with overseas universities and on external aid in relation to gender; and
- vii. To report at least once a year to the Academic Planning Committee.

Gender Policy and Programs Committee (GPPC) has served as a source of inspiration for gender and development practitioners within and outside the university community (Raditlhokwa, 2010). Its members have supported Gender Management Structures (GMS) such as the Women Affairs Department (WAD), the Botswana National Council on Women (BNCW) and the now defunct Women's NGO Coalition (Raditlhokwa, 2010). The university has also supported gender training as a critical aspect of gender mainstreaming conducted by other Gender Management Structures of national institutions in Botswana. In June 2002, some UB gender trainers assisted the Women Affairs Department, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programs on a National Workshop with the theme "Mainstreaming Gender into HIV/AIDS Initiatives" (Raditlhokwa, 2010).

The poor performance in the area of gender empowerment is as a result of faltering commitment exhibited by the key players in Gender Management Structures (including the GPPC) and not lack of financial resources. Despite the commendable efforts initiated by the University of Botswana in mainstreaming gender, the commitment to radically transform critical structures and actualise gender policy goals along a gender sensitive perspective is disappointingly weak. A host of reasons are used to account for this institutional lethargy. This study therefore aims at assessing the efforts of the University of Botswana (UB) to mainstream gender in its critical structures in accordance with its Gender Policy and Programs Committee (GPPC) and Botswana's National Gender Program Framework. An enabling environment is a requisite condition for effective gender mainstreaming. A positive or enabling environment for gender mainstreaming, according to Taylor (1999), must have the following features:

- i. Political will at the highest level of an organisation;
- ii. Legal and administrative frameworks that are supportive of the goal of gender equality; and
- iii. Sufficient human, technical and financial resources to implement gender integration initiatives.

In addition to an enabling environment are positive human relationships. These relationships facilitate communication between and among different structures. A culture that encourages males and females to develop and fully unleash their prodigious creative potential for both individual and collective gain in a framework that promotes social justice and human empowerment should be promoted (Raditlhokwa, 2010). No man has monopoly or is an absolute reservoir of knowledge. Immediately after the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, Botswana and other countries in the South African Development Community (SADC) produced National Gender Programs to attempt to develop this enabling environment. This move was facilitated and accelerated by active lobbying and advocacy conducted by the SADC Gender Unit in Gaborone and the National Gender Machineries in the region.

In an attempt to create public awareness needed for gender transformation in Botswana, an Advocacy and Social Mobilisation Strategy of the National Gender Program Framework developed and launched officially in 1999. Unfortunately, due to persistent implementation paralysis experienced, the National Gender Machinery has not sufficiently performed this strategy. One obvious consequence of this paralysis is the current lack of knowledge and technical skills for actualising the strategy. Another requisite condition for effective gender mainstreaming is the institutional framework. Raditlhokwa (2010) opines that at UB these structures include the GPPC, faculty Gender Committees and the Sexual Harassment Complaints Committee. The Gender Committee formed in 1989 in the Faculty of Education was instrumental in gender mainstreaming efforts at UB. In fact, its leadership played a pivotal role in the formation of the GPPC.

## METHOD

This study adopts survey as its research design. Data for the study were generated through the secondary and primary sources and analysed using simple percentage and frequency counts. The secondary data were sourced from components of the National Gender Machinery for Botswana, while the primary source was by personal observation as a gender trainer and member of the GPPC. The data collated for the study were analysed using frequency distribution table and simple percentage.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

***Hindering Factors:*** Although the Vice Chancellor's office has demonstrated a progressive attitude over the years, UB is predominantly a patriarchal organisation bearing most of the characteristics of a male dominated Tswana society. A critical mass of leaders in the university system is still gender insensitive. During the gender training workshop for senior management mentioned previously, many of the male participants made trivial, controversial and sexist comments about women (Raditlhokwa, 2010). Another hindering factor is the failure to induct new members. These include members of critical structures like the Senate, the university Council, the UB Foundation, academic and non-academic staff associations, the Student Representative Council and student organisations on campus on gender and development issues. The Gender Policy and Sexual Harassment policy are not fully understood by staff and students. Motaung (2006) indicates that students' level of awareness and use of the Sexual Harassment Policy was disappointingly low. This issue is supported by Tidimane (2005).

Mathiba (1996) reveals that many UB students avoid using the services offered at the Counselling Centre for the fear of being misperceived to be victims of mental illness. The UB Counselling Centre, which should be addressing gender-based problems experienced by students such as gender violence is still under-utilised as many students are not fully conversant with their service. During an International Conference on Counselling organised by the Botswana Counselling Association (16-19 August 2010) similar sentiments were expressed by some participants from UB (Raditlhokwa, 2010). The UB Gender Policy has not been integrated into other university policies such as the Performance Management System (PMS) and the UB statutes. Also the university has not developed other policies and programs that could help promote gender equality like Mentoring Policy. The Learning and Teaching Policy has recently been introduced but it is gender blind (Raditlhokwa, 2010).

Although the university is expected to demonstrate a progressive outlook by setting ambitious targets for gender equality, including the SADC 50% quota for female representation in its critical structures, according to Raditlhokwa (2010), no specific targets have been set. Hence if there is no progress in this regard, no one is held accountable. Raditlhokwa (2010) also commends that some women have been entrusted higher responsibility in the university, but the university, like every other gender insensitive or patriarchal institution has not developed special measures to support these female leaders. And due to lack of a staff retention strategy, some progressive men and women have quit UB. With this development, UB Gender Management Structures' capacity to advocate for gender equality within and without campus has been adversely affected.

Another factor is the occupational segregation. The vocal chairperson of the GPPC Dr. Aude Dikobe has nonchalantly commented that there is not much to celebrate in terms of gender equality at UB. Dikobe made her remarks in December in 2007 during the university's commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism on Violence against Women under the theme "Education for Social Justice: Gender based violence: HIV/AIDS and Power Relations". According to her, occupational segregation is a cause for concern at UB. She declares that gender inequality is rife at UB (Chwaane, 2007), and she attributes this situation to "a masculine culture at the university, where managerial positions are manned by men". Although considerable efforts have been made to mainstream gender in the UB structures, such efforts have not caught on and produced great fruits. UB still has a long way to cross the bridge particularly because the institutional capacity that was built over the years has declined resulting in gender mainstreaming being taken very lightly. Since occupational segregation is rampant in the university structures, it has taken unacceptably too long to have only one woman as the Deputy Vice Chancellor in University of Botswana. And the number of males preponderates that of women in virtually all critical ranks.

Gender activism on campus has now declined to an unacceptably low level. If UB is committed and loyal to its goal of becoming the centre for excellence, or role model institution locally and internationally, it should enthusiastically reverse a culture that fosters "hidden" institutional sexism. The issue of female representation in the UB SRC portrays the stark reality of the "permanentization" of patriarchal rule. As a matter of tradition, female representation on campus has always been irritatingly low in UB. Raditlhokwa (2010) goes further that the rhetoric that females want to partake in decision making process, females at UB, who are expected to serve as an inspiration to other women throughout the country, are politically apathetic and indifferent. They have tragically accepted political marginalisation as a fact of their existence on campus (Raditlhokwa, 2007).

Female representation in the SRC has never approached 50%. For instance, the gender disaggregated figures compiled by the Department of Student Affairs show that the number of females in the SRC was commonly low (table 2). The very fact that UB and its affiliated institutions are expected to groom the youth for inspiring leadership means the poverty of gender awareness and sensitivity in these institutions should be radically challenged to discourage sexism in education, business, interpersonal relationships, party politics and other spheres of national life (Raditlhokwa, 1994). A mentoring program should be initiated for young female staff so as to increase female scholars' occupational progression. Sexual harassment is another impediment for gender mainstreaming. The former president of the SRC was quoted alleging that many women on campus complained of male lecturers who award students marks in exchange for sex (Mazwiduma, 2008). The same



charge has been echoed by Selabe (2009) and Mokone (2009). Many students on campus don't really know how to deal with the perpetrators of sexual harassment because there is no active program for consistently sensitising students and staff on sexual harassment. Female sexual harassment and other forms of gender based violence is the order of the day because the sexual harassment policy is not perfected. Gender work for academic self-aggrandisement is also a delayed factor. There is a faltering commitment to transformative gender mainstreaming at UB (Radithokwa, 2010). The university environment represents in microcosm the larger society. Hence, any minute commitment within the university environment is felt by the entire society, in this case, the Botswana society.

Unlike the rest of the society, gender work at UB is not given the desired priority. Though there is a consensus that gender mainstreaming is necessary at UB, yet it is not a compulsory requirement. And many who are working in the area of gender are perceived to be doing "soft" voluntary work. Their work is not regarded as a serious professional activity, particularly because gender activism is still fundamentally treated as a "women's affair". The culture that promotes patriarchal hegemony is still very strong and is even consciously and unconsciously supported by gender insensitive and docile females. Even though some gender activists on campus appear to have a huge passion for gender work, they are not ambitious revolutionaries with a profound and burning desire to shake up and transform gender relations.

They tend to engage in gender activities so that they can fulfil academic goals. For instance, one may serve in the GPPC or Faculty Gender Committee, or carry out research on gender for purposes of boosting his/her academic profile. This partly explains why some gender activists end up scaling down their involvement in gender work once they achieve academic self-elevation. This attitude reflects what Onyeani (1990) refers to as the shallowness of the education received by the Africans. Onyeani (1990) argues that many African scholars are not committed to studying knowledge for the benefit of the people; instead they study for the purpose of making quick money for themselves. A related criticism is launched by Hadjor (1987), who strongly asserts that "Universities reflect standards and norms which have little to do with Africa. Even when efforts are made to inject the curriculum that is relevant to Africa the results are disappointing". Following UB's introduction of the Policy on Political Activities on Campus, university students have also lashed out at the university administration. They perceive this move as undemocratic because it denies them a chance to bargain and collectively present their political views (Dipogiso, 2007). At UB, Dr. Tiro Sebina (2007:23) reverberates that:

*"high level academics and university managers are closer to state authorities than ordinary people... More significantly,*

*the participation of prominent academics in the material affairs of national or international import has been of consolidation rather than subversion or protest against the state or its mechanisms of hegemony".*

Narrow academic gender activism and careerism should be expected in a university setting like UB. Lynd (1983) notes that academic life or careerism generally nurtures middle class selfishness. In my assessment, this reality emanates from gender activists' lack of solid collective consciousness, solidarity, and a profound desire to change society. Karl Marx has emphasised the need for change agents to move beyond studying society and radically transform its institutions as a step towards improving citizens' welfare (Leonard, 1975). The net effect of self-aggrandising academic gender activism and politically naïve professionalism is that even if the activists achieve academically through gender work, in practice very little concrete progress occurs in gender relations. Thus there is need for gender activists on campus to widen the scope of their activism and use their work to create and sustain desirable changes in the entire university system. A change in this direction can only come to pass once academics begin to fully understand their pivotal role in society and accept that they have a huge moral obligation to sacrificially fulfil this role.

The GPPC has also demonstrated its declining commitment by recycling functionaries, some of whom are obviously fatigued, or have lost passion for their work. Many such politically frustrated functionaries miss meetings, or do not carry out their assignments. More importantly, the elections for the GPPC are frequently delayed due to apathy among gender activists and disorganisation within the GPPC. Crucially, this state of affairs has thrown the GPPC into a profound crisis of purpose. Emphasise that apathy and self-absorption are not only peculiar to gender activists at UB. This phenomenon has afflicted many people in political parties and civil society organisation, and is contributing to premature decay of institutions in Botswana. This social malaise is significantly a function of the dependency syndrome emanating from the crisis of national leadership. This situation can also be explained in terms of what Nasser and Vivier (1995) call the "succession deprivation syndrome". This means a situation whereby organisations fail to groom young leaders who should take over when older ones retire or cease to function effectively. The issue of leadership is very important when it comes to developing a university. According to Mbigi (2005), effective leadership, one that can usher in institutional renaissance in Africa, should foster development or progress in organisations, communities and the entire society in such a manner that the envisaged transformation positively affects the lives of all and sundry. Even the Long Term Vision for Botswana calls for effective leadership across all national institutions.



As a corporate entity, the university should ensure that all its policies and programs are fully implemented in accordance with its vision, mission and values. If the Gender Management Structures fail to enforce Gender Policy commitments, such inaction is symptomatic of the trivialisation of women-specific gender issues. This lack of commitment makes it difficult to establish strong accountability systems. The lack of accountability explains why the university and the GPPC have not set targets for gender empowerment. Lack of accountability is also expressed in the lack of effective coordination, monitoring and evaluation systems. The university Gender Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy and other gender mainstreaming efforts have not been reviewed to determine their relevance and effectiveness. Evidently, the failure to ensure effective mainstreaming of gender in the afore-mentioned UB structures means the university is not taking the commitment it has expressed in its vision as seriously as it should. This raises questions about the ability of UB to act inspiringly as a prototype or role model in the faltering gender mainstreaming exercise which was initiated by the ailing National Gender Machinery.

**Table 1:** University of Botswana academic officers by rank (2010)

Rank	Male	Female	Total
Professor	43 (88%)	6(12%)	49
Associate Professor	56 (93%)	4(7%)	60
Director	16 (89%)	2(11%)	18
Deputy Director	12 (50%)	12(50%)	24
Dean	6 (86%)	1(14%)	7
Deputy Dean	6 (86%)	1(14%)	7
Head of Department	28 (74%)	10(26%)	38

**Source:** Department of Human Resources and Raditlhokwa, L. (2010)

**Table 2:** Representation by gender in UB SRC (2004/2005-2012/2013)

Academic Year	No of Males	No of Females	Total
2004/2005	11	2	13
2005/2006	11	2	13
2006/2007	11	2	13
2007/2008	11	2	13
2008/2009	11	2	13
2009/2010	11	1	12
2010/2011	12	2	14
2011/2012	11	2	13
2012/2013	11	3	14

**Source:** Department of Human Resources and Raditlhokwa, L. (2010)

**Corrective Actions:** There is an urgent need to overcome the roadblocks that prevent effective gender mainstreaming from taking place at UB. The most important priority is for the university to develop leadership and managerial capability. Resuscitating of all dilapidated structures as well as putting in place new and vibrant ones. In 2007-2008 the population of students and staff of the UB were 15,484 and 2658 respectively. Thus, the GPPC cannot perform well without an office and administrative staff. It should acquire these resources as a matter of urgency. Paradoxically, organisations are not taking bold and imaginative action to tackle these succession problems according to Raditlhokwa (2010). These organisations end up having poor or sterile leadership.

In Botswana, this succession problem has not only affected organisations working in the area of gender and development; it has also weakened political parties and civil society organisations. This means that organisations lack succession plans because they have not appreciated the importance of training a critical mass of leaders who can replace those who resign or retire. Overcoming the curse of inaction is another good corrective action that should be dealt with decisively. Evidently, the GPPC officials have plenty of information about gender issues and challenges they are facing. They also have resources to confront the challenges. But they simply can't act to produce the desired results. Strangely, they have become victims of the "paralysis of analysis" (Nasser and Vivier: 1995), that is, instead of taking decisive actions against the situations that cause stagnation and regression, they have tacitly convinced themselves that they need to perpetually find more information and talk passively about gender problems on campus. According to Raditlhokwa (2010), this "curse of inaction" is due to the fact that most of the personalities in the GPPC are thinkers/talkers who lack a sense of urgency. They are not fruitful doers/finishers.

For a meaningful transformation to happen and take root, the "gender movement" on campus should undergo a massive paradigm transformation. Gender movement should be used as a counterculture and not subculture. It should shift its restrictive orientation which has relegated it to the marginal status of a subculture. Consequently, the fledgling gender network has failed to counter the dominant patriarchal system that exists at UB. According to Silvosu (2006), people in a subculture are satisfied with surviving under the dominant culture, whereas those who are in a counterculture deeply desire to debunk and replace it. The GPPC should develop a strategic plan and mobilise requisite resources to implement it. As of now, the GPPC is muddling through and it is no longer clear what its key priorities are (Raditlhokwa, 2010). Hence, there should be gender planning and resource mobilisation. The university administration should establish a robust supervisory system to ensure that the implementation and institutionalisation of the GPPC's activities are meticulously monitored, coordinated and evaluated. As

well, the office bearers in the GPPC should be held accountable for their performance in accordance with the PMS philosophy. Currently, no meaningful consequences are meted out against incompetent and disillusioned performers in the GPPC. Finally, in order to revitalise the "gender movement" on campus, and get the activists to know and motivate each other, the GPPC should sponsor a regular annual conference that will bring together campus activists and their collaborators within and outside Botswana. The conference should deliberate on contemporary gender issues faced by the university and Botswana and formulate effective responses.

## CONCLUSION

There is an urgent need for the intellectual leadership of the "gender movement" on campus to rekindle its commitment to transformational gender politics. The leadership should reorganise and capacitate the GPPC, so that it can energetically and responsibly fulfil its noble mandate. The GPPC should endeavour to attract people with a positive mental outlook. Currently, many of its functionaries have succumbed to self-debilitating negativity. Because of lack of action orientation, they profusely complain about problems they consider overwhelming. The positive developments that have occurred at University of Botswana are attributed to the UB Vision, mission and value statements as they are opposed to discrimination based on gender and other social characteristics. The university makes an effort to promote positive action, as the university has developed a gender policy framework and sexual harassment policy. Faculties have also introduced numerous gender courses in the curriculum.

The GPPC urgently needs tough-minded possibilarians, hardheaded enterprising people and invincible transformers with profound commitment to inject fresh vision and hope in the entire university. Thus, it recommends that there should be a good balance between people elected to the GPPC and its substructures, so that there may be positive change and progress. Clearly, for a change in this direction to occur, the entire UB intellectual leadership and management should seriously treat gender mainstreaming as a crucial ingredient for developing high quality education for the nation. Effectively organised, adequately disciplined, dedicated and determined political and human right activists, the civil society is another important factor necessary for effective gender integration in order to drive the process of organizational change from a gender based orientation. In addition, a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that would ensure effective accountability of the systems must be in place.

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