



UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

WORKSHOP REPORT_ UNIVERSITIES, THE RAMIFICATIONS OF SCIENCE SYSTEMS AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP OF SCIENCE SYSTEMS IN AFRICA 20 JULY 2023 at the UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The report presents a summary of the Workshop of a project titled *'Universities, the ramifications of science systems and women's leadership of science systems in Africa'* which is one of the activities outlined in the signed Memorandum of Understanding between The University of Zimbabwe and the African Leadership Centre, Kenya. The Workshop took place at the University of Zimbabwe on the 20th of July 2023. The project is being implemented by the University of Nairobi (Kenya), Maseno University (Kenya), University of Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe), and the University of Pretoria (South Africa). The project is also coordinated by the African Leadership Centre (ALC) in collaboration with Kings College London. The report presents key highlights from the workshop-the presentation of the project background to the participants and the focus group discussion highlights.

1.1 KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOP

The Workshop started at 0830hours with arrival and registrations. The Workshop was attended by twenty-one (21) women in leadership positions from 11 state universities, four (4) private universities, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises and the Women's Law Centre. Attendees were from Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT), Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE), Women Law Centre, Great Zimbabwe University, Gwanda State University (GSU), Harare Institute of Technology (HIT), Manicaland State University, Marondera University of Agricultural Science & Technology (MUASt), Midlands State University (MSU), National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe (NUST), University of Zimbabwe (UZ), Women's University in Africa (WUA), Selous University, Ezekiel Guti University, Africa University, Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises and the research team from the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe.

Dr. Stanzia Moyo (Dean Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and the Institutional Liaison of the project) gave the opening remarks. She provided an overview of the project. She further indicated that the expected outputs from the project include; the production of intervention models to increase the participation of women in higher education systems to enhance maximum utilization of human resources, and coming up with a training module in universities for the empowerment of the females to take up top leadership positions.



Dr Stanzia Moyo giving the opening remarks and the project overview

Professor Marvellous Mhloyi, the Team Lead of the project, presented the background of the project. One of the main questions was whether or not the inclusion of women in leadership positions in higher education systems could lead to more positive outcomes. Other issues to be interrogated by the project included: the perceptions of female leaders occupying the positions of influence; perceptions of those aspiring to participate in positions of influence; and, the levels of enrolment of female students in higher education systems when compared to males. She presented the research methodology where a survey will be used to collect quantitative data, while key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and documentary review will be used to collect qualitative data.



Professor Marvellous Mhloyi presenting the overall project background

1.3 Focus Group Discussion

Professor Marvellous Mhloyi facilitated the focus group discussions on the perceptions of women in top university leadership. Firstly, the discussion centered on gender composition across Zimbabwean Universities. Gender composition was noted to be generally male-dominated across Universities in Zimbabwe. No variation was noted between state and private universities. However, males in many state universities seem to have occupied the position of Registrar. On the other hand, in some universities, most female leaders in Deanship positions seem to occupy academic disciplines in Social Sciences and Arts as compared to Medicine and other hard Sciences. Participants also reported that while most women are employees in the accommodation, catering and secretarial services, leaders are predominantly male.



Professor Mhloyi facilitating the focus group discussion with participants from various universities

The discussions also traced the genesis and development of gender imbalance as a result of culture in Zimbabwean society. The cultural perspective noted that, historically, resources and empowerment were skewed towards men at the disadvantage of females. Men were deemed to be providers while females were supposed to undertake domestic roles that are deemed feminine against the masculine side. In ancient times, men had to participate in risky and protective contexts like hunting and protecting their families which defined the gender roles in society. The Zimbabwean colonial period seemed to have entrenched the gender bias on men where men had to come to town. This was primarily because of the modern labour system that demanded education. In addition, men were supposed to come as bachelors to work without their wives.

Colonial policies and structures were also noted as other inhibiting factors to gender balance. Participants reported that '*pass laws*' inhibited the participation of women in urban areas and the employment systems. The system supported the domestication of women and less-worthy jobs like waitresses and cleaners. During the liberation struggle, women however, seem to have taken a fair share of participation. The post-independence era is now working on the implementation of a gender balance in leadership positions. Inheritance was also noted as a cultural factor that could have led to a male-biased system and empowerment in Zimbabwe.

Participants also noted that in some cases girls do not have a change of mind set to address the historical issues. Men are expected to take care of all the family responsibilities despite the call for gender balance in all economic and social systems of Zimbabwe. Girls expect their boyfriends to take care of their needs regardless of having equal socio-economic conditions. Some women are now participating in top-leadership positions and some women are also inspired to take part in the leadership positions-the role-model effect.



Ms Mudavanhu-Dean of Students at the Harare Institute of Technology contributing during the focus group discussion

The discussions also interrogated if gender composition affects teaching, learning and other activities at the Universities. Participants highlighted that the inclusion of women makes a positive change in the University context. Women seem to be patient in dealing with issues. Women seem to be more caring to the university staff and students. The nurturing aspect of women seems to be coming into the profession in a positive way. Women seem to be thorough in doing what they are supposed to be doing in their jobs. It was also noted that having female leaders can also change the perception of both male and female students in Universities. Participants indicated that the participation of females in leadership positions motivates both female and male students. In areas like supervision, it was noted that women seem to be more caring and concerned and thorough than men. However, in teaching, participants reported that it was a debatable area given that it depends on the character commitment, quality and subject mastery of an individual.

Participants also highlighted the challenges faced by women in top university leadership. It was noted that women get appointed for a long time in acting capacities for a very long time but they will not be substantively appointed. In some cases, female subordinates fail to support female leaders as compared to men. In some cases, males fail to support females in leadership positions thinking that the position requires one to be a male. In some instances, it was noted that the attitude of the female before assuming the leadership position may influence the respect of others. The way female leaders present themselves to others was noted to have an influence on how other staff members support them.

The focus group discussion ended with the development of a committee to spearhead the implementation of women-oriented strategies for empowerment and upliftment within the Universities in Zimbabwe.

The University of Zimbabwe Research Team also managed to collect survey data from participants from all the Universities. In addition, five (5) in-depth interviews with the selected women in University leaders at the Workshop were also undertaken. The Workshop ended at 1530 hours.

1.4 Conclusion

The Workshop was successful and enlightening towards the implementation of the project. The workshop enabled the research team to gain a snapshot of the gendered dynamics in university leadership in Zimbabwe. The inclusion of private universities enhanced the understanding of the gender perspectives, experiences and systems across institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe.

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