

Gender Mainstreaming in Education in Zimbabwe: Mirth?

Pharaoh Joseph Mavhunga¹, Beatrice Bondai²

University of Zimbabwe, Mount Pleasant, Harare, ZIMBABWE.

¹mavhunga2001@yahoo.com, ²bbondai2010@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the extent to which policies and measures put in place by the Zimbabwean government in the post-independence era have addressed gender imbalances in the education sector at primary, secondary and tertiary levels in line with the gender mainstreaming thrust as propounded by the United Nations Millennium Development Goal Number 3. The analysis is done against the background of the Report on the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (Nziramasanga, 1999) that recommended a school curriculum for Zimbabwe that incorporates the country's spiritual, cultural and moral values, rooted in the philosophy of unhu/ubuntu, yet culture has often been cited as one of the major impediments to girl child advancement in education. This paper argues that although huge strides have so far been made towards the advancement of the girl child in education and in society in general, much work still needs to be done. The paper recommends that there is need for Zimbabwean communities to change their culturally embedded attitudes towards and perceptions about the education of the girl child, if meaningful development is to be realized in all sectors of the Zimbabwean society, education included. One concrete measure that the paper recommends, for instance, is that girls who fall pregnant while at school should be allowed to go back to their schools after delivery to continue with their education. If gender mainstreaming is not fully realized, then the girl child, and the woman in our society, will forever be treated as second class citizens. Consequently, their unhu/ubuntu will remain diminished, thereby casting gender mainstreaming in the Zimbabwean society in general and in education in particular a mere mirth, the paper argues.

Keywords: disparity, discrimination, gender, gender mainstreaming

INTRODUCTION

Gender disparity in sub-Saharan Africa, Zimbabwe included, has historically been pronounced in all spheres of life including political, economic and social life. Men have always dominated women and they (boys included) have always enjoyed privileges that society extended to them through cultural heritage for the simple reason that they were male. The advent of colonialism in 1890 dealt a massive second blow on the African woman who had to endure oppression and deprivation together with her male counterpart because they were black, but had to suffer another heavier blow on account of being a black woman. Thus, the African woman had to endure oppression at two levels.

One area where women have historically faced inequity is education. Like in most colonial states, the blacks in Zimbabwe, both male and female, were deliberately denied access to education by the successive colonial governments that ruled the country through a policy of racial segregation between the ruling white minority class and the subjected indigenous black majority. Where blacks were somehow able to sneak into the education system, it was the boy child who benefitted largely because of the African belief that the boy child was superior to the girl child. Educating the boy child was perceived as an investment for the family while educating the girl child was perceived as a waste of resources because she would eventually

get married and leave the family. So strong were such perceptions that some vestiges of discrimination against the girl child where education is concerned are still noticeable in the Zimbabwean society today.

The advent of independence in Zimbabwe ushered in a new era where segregation on the basis of gender was denounced. A raft of policies were hastily crafted to try and address issues of in-equality between male and female. Such policies spilled over to the area of education where a variety of measures were put in place to try and redress the imbalances between, firstly, blacks and whites and, secondly, between male and female. Main focus, initially, was on primary education as this formed the basis for secondary and, subsequently, tertiary education. One of the post-independence major goals, starting with primary education, was the need to narrow the participation gap and the transition rate from Grade Seven to Form One between male and female pupils. To what extent has the participation gap between male and female participants been narrowed?

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Gender mainstreaming in education should be tackled against a background of girl-child deprivation since the introduction of formal education in Zimbabwe by Christian missionaries on the turn of the 19th century. The cultural milieu in Zimbabwe, fed by enduring traditional practices of ancient times, has always viewed the education of the boy – child as a form of family investment, based on the assumption that once educated, the boy would get a good job and earn a good salary which he would then use to cater for the needs of his parents, the extended family, as well as his own family of procreation. This assumption was built over the years on the premise that when boys got married, they would set up their homes at their parents' homestead together with their wives, a vantage position from which they would assist with the development of the extended family. The boy's parents would then rest assured, with a sense of security that, in their old age, their boy – child would continue to look after them, hence the notion that educating the boy – child was a form of good investment.

The girl – child, on the other hand, was traditionally regarded as a 'temporary resident' at their parents' home. The assumption was that, once physically mature, at the age of about eighteen (sometimes earlier), they would get themselves a suitor, get married, and join their husband's family. Once gone, they would work towards the development of their new home at the husband's place and have very little to do with her parents who brought her up. Of course, once in a while, her husband was expected to assist his parents – in – law (the girl's parents) financially and materially but this depended much on the son – in – law's magnanimity rather than obligation. For this reason, parents saw very little value in educating the girl - child as this was viewed as misplaced investment. All that the girl child needed was a little schooling to enable them to read and write so that they would be able to correspond with their potential suitors. As recently as the 1970s, it was common for families to have a policy of educating the girl – child up to the fourth or fifth grade only, to enable them just to read and write. Such thinking has tended to persist, particularly in rural communities which have tended to maintain largely traditional set-ups.

From the background given above, it is clear that historically, the girl - child in Zimbabwe has always had very limited access to formal education, even the very basic form of it. Another hindrance to girl – child education from the traditional perspective has been that the girl – child was seen by her parents and the extended family, right from birth, as a source of potential income through marriage. Once the girl - child attained 'marriageable age', the whole community expected her to find herself a suitor, preferably a wealthy man, to marry

her and pay a fortune to the girls' parents as a bride price. This would be in the form of a herd of cattle, or money or both.

For the reason that the marriage of a girl – child would bring income into the family, early marriages became the order of the day. Forced marriages also were not uncommon in the traditional Zimbabwean set-up before independence in 1980. Early marriages and forced marriages meant that schooling became unnecessary for the girl - child as she was bound to get married, anyway.

Added to the scenario described above, was the issue of labor in the home. Traditionally, the girl – child was (and still is) expected to assist with household chores such as sweeping the house and courtyard, cooking, washing up dishes, washing clothes as well as weeding in the fields. Sometimes they were also expected to herd cattle and goats, a largely boy – child responsibility, as the boys went to school. Sending the girl – child to school, therefore, was seen as a deprivation of the much needed labor force in the home.

To compound the problems that militated against the girl – child's school attendance was the socialization that the girl – child was subjected to that led her to believe that indeed the boy – child was supposed to go to school, even at her expense. Mothers played a crucial role in socializing the girl into accepting that her place was in the kitchen, and not at school through the stereotyped gender roles described above. They (mothers) were supposed to educate the girl – child to be a good future wife and mother, an education that was meant to add value to the girl when it came to fetching a good bride price upon marriage.

Against this background which has been given in considerable detail, it is easy to understand why the girl – child in Zimbabwe has historically legged behind the boy – child, and continues to do so, in terms of access to education. Girls have had a history of deprivation and, therefore, have a lot of catching up to do. Gender mainstreaming in education, therefore, remains topical because, statistically, the girl – child still lags behind the boy – child in participation rates at all levels of education in Zimbabwe.

The attainment of political independence in 1980 ushered in a new philosophy towards Zimbabwean women's rights in general and, more specifically, on access to education. One piece of legislation that has had profound impact on women's rights since independence was the enactment of the Age of Majority Act. Through this piece of legislation, Zimbabwean women could, for the first time, enter into various contracts without first seeking for consent from a man such as their father or husband. Women could now sue or be sued in their own right. In short, the legislation brought men and women to parity at home, in the work place and in society as a whole, at least from a legal point of view.

Coupled with the above, the new post – independence government adopted the United Nations Bill of Rights which spells out the various rights that individuals, regardless of their sex, should enjoy. Of interest to this paper was the recognition by the new government that education for all citizens, including women, was a basic human right. Consequently, the new government declared a policy of free primary education for all citizens in 1980. With this policy in place, tuition fee at primary school level became the responsibility of central government. The implication of the policy was that all children (and young adults that had been denied education as a result of colonial government policy and the effects of the war of liberation) could now go to school as the issue of school fees as a barrier to access education had fallen away. Another plus for the girl - child was that through the Age of Majority Act, the payment of bride price by a suitor for a wife – to – be had become optional, hence parents could not push their daughters into early or forced marriages as bride price was no longer guaranteed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Gender discourse is primarily a post-modern era phenomenon which culminated in the formation of women's pressure groups that sought to dismantle the gap that existed between men and women's rights since time immemorial. So intense was the lobbying by women's pressure groups particularly in the 20th century that in countries like the United States of America it became confrontational. Women's liberation movements were soon formed and took the center stage in fighting for women's rights. A major milestone in the fight for women's rights was the staging of the famous Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995 in Beijing, China. One of the major outcomes of the conference was the resolution on the need for governments of participating countries to embark on gender mainstreaming in all functions of the state.

In order to discuss meaningfully efforts that have been made globally to mainstream gender in general, and in Zimbabwe in particular, there is need to first attempt a clear conceptual analysis of gender mainstreaming as a concept. The Council of Europe's Group of Specialists on Gender Mainstreaming, a body whose role is to promote gender equality in its member states, starts by acknowledging the fact that imbalances between women and men continue to influence all walks of life and it is becoming increasingly clear that new approaches, new strategies and new methods are needed to reach the goal of gender equality. The Council believes gender mainstreaming is one of these strategies. The Council defines gender mainstreaming as follows;

Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making.

The Council goes on to say that gender mainstreaming entails defining common principles and standards to promote the full participation of women and men in society. It is a strategy that aims at reaching the goal of gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming is also viewed as a strategy for pushing through actual equal treatment of the genders. This definition focuses more at the operational level rather than the policy level. It is crucial for the discussion of gender mainstreaming in education in Zimbabwe: What is it that is being done at specific institutional levels to foster gender equality? What measures are being exactly taken to ensure gender equality at all levels of education in Zimbabwe and with what impact? Are there any set goals in place to foster equal participation in education between boys and girls, men and women?

Gender theory suggests that for gender mainstreaming to take root, there must be specific activities derived from the set goals. Most importantly, there must be a checklist to ascertain whether the set activities are being accomplished. The Asian Development Bank (2001), for example, came up with the following eight – point checklist for education in Asian member states:

i. Making Schools more Accessible

Shortening the distance to school will encourage girls' enrolment in particular. Girls' safety and social reputation are less at risk when schools are closer to communities. Ensure that separate facilities and closed latrines are available.

ii. Improving the Quality of Teachers and Increasing the Number of Female Teachers

Set minimum quotas for female teachers. Because relatively few women meet standard teaching requirements, active local recruitment is essential, especially in rural areas. Bringing training closer to communities often attracts women who might otherwise not consider teaching because of cultural constraints on female mobility, lack of housing, or family responsibilities. Incorporate gender awareness in the teacher-training curriculum.

iii. Lowering the Cost to Parents

In many societies, parents regard schooling for girls to be less affordable than that for boys. In their view, the direct costs (e.g., tuition and textbooks), hidden costs (e.g., uniforms and supplies), and opportunity costs (e.g., for girls household tasks, agriculture responsibilities) of educating girls outweigh the benefits. Scholarship programs can be introduced to cover certain costs, such as tuition, textbooks, uniforms, and boarding facilities. Stipends can lessen opportunity costs.

iv. Developing Relevant Curricula

Girls will be attracted to and benefit from a curriculum that is relevant to their lives, that links education with agriculture and productive activities, addresses health and nutrition issues, employs the local language, seeks out the potential in the given setting, and at the same time eliminates gender stereotyping

v. Increasing Parental and Community Understanding through Participatory Approaches

In many communities, there is a need to change attitudes toward the education of girls. The support of influential community members and religious leaders can be harnessed to encourage parents to send both male and female children to school. The involvement of parents and communities in planning, management, decision-making, and advocacy efforts has a positive effect on girls' education.

vi. Promoting Decentralization in Administration and Management

When school management functions are transferred from the state/provincial level down to the district and local levels through education or development committees and other local management mechanisms, there is usually also an attempt at fairer distribution of female and male membership in the school committees.

vii. Designing Systems that Meet Students Gender – Specific Needs

The specific cultural and other issues that constrain girls and boys educational activities and achievements should be studied so that meaningful programs can be designed. Flexible forms of schooling, such as half-day primary schools, part-time primary schools, and primary schools established in poverty-stricken areas, could make schools more accessible to girls with domestic responsibilities as well as boys with competing activities in the marketplace.

viii. Designing Multiple Delivery Systems

Formal education alone cannot achieve the objective of providing universal basic education. Education for boys and girls, men and women should be delivered through a variety of channels. Non-formal educational alternatives are often also useful.

The eight-point checklist given above, though developed for Asian countries, has relevance to most developing countries, Zimbabwe included. An analysis of the extent to which

Zimbabwe has achieved gender mainstreaming which follows later will certainly take the check list above into account.

The philosophy of *unhu/ubuntu* on the other hand is defined by Nziramasanga (1999: 62) as, “--- a concept that denotes a good human being, a well behaved and morally upright person, characterized by qualities such as responsibility, honesty, justice, trustworthiness, hard work, integrity, a cooperative spirit, solidarity, hospitality, devotion to family and welfare of the community.” Archbishop Desmond Tutu(1999) proffered the following definition of *ubuntu*;

A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.

The African philosophy of *ubuntu*, for instance, has had a tremendous impact the world over, particularly in the area of conflict resolution and reconciliation, based on the popular African adage ‘I am what I am because of who we all are.’ The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (Nziramasanga, 1999) recommends that the Zimbabwean school curricula should be rooted in the *unhu/ubuntu* philosophy on the basis of the virtues that the philosophy promotes. Since the philosophy is steeped in ‘culture’ this paper takes an interest in assessing whether the philosophy does not have a negative impact on Zimbabwe’s attempts to mainstream gender into education, among other facets of life.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although the post-independence Zimbabwean government and other stakeholders’ have made efforts through various policies and other initiatives to promote chances of access to education by both boys and girls and to remove obstacles that hamper girls participation in particular, (WCEFA Final Report, 1990), it seems gender parity is yet to be achieved. Girls seem to continue to be marginalized. This paper assesses the extent to which policies and measures put in place by the Zimbabwean government in the post-independence era have addressed gender imbalances in the education sector at primary, secondary and tertiary levels in line with the gender mainstreaming thrust as propounded by the United Nations Millennium Development Goal Number 3. Gender mainstreaming as a strategy, aims at making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (United Nations, 1997) within the perspective of *unhu/ubuntu*. The paper interrogates issues that could be hindering a full realization of gender equity and equality in all spheres of life in general and education in particular. The paper seeks to accomplish this by, among other things, analyzing Zimbabwe’s educational policy documents, examining educational reports and reviewing literature.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Against the background outlined above, this paper asks:

1. Are Zimbabwe’s gender mainstreaming policies effective in bringing about gender equity and equality in education and, therefore, developing a nation with *unhu/ubuntu*?
2. To what extent have post-independence Zimbabwe’s intervention programmes realized gender equity and equality in education?

3. Is gender equity and equality possible or is it simply an ideal that is unattainable – a mirage?
4. What are the gender mainstreaming challenges in education and the way forward?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The paper is guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's gender mainstreaming policies in education;
2. To evaluate the extent to which Zimbabwe's intervention programmes have realized gender equity and equality in education;
3. To interrogate the feasibility of gender equity and equality in education in Zimbabwe; and
4. To determine the challenges that Zimbabwe is facing in its quest for gender equity and equality in education and to proffer possible solutions.

METHODOLOGY

Data for the paper were gathered through:

1. Incisive review of literature on gender mainstreaming in general and in education in particular;
2. Analysis of Zimbabwe's policy documents on gender mainstreaming in general and in education in particular;
3. Examining research and annual reports on gender mainstreaming in education in Zimbabwe; and
4. Interviewing Ministry of Education officials and experts for their views and opinions on gender mainstreaming.

FINDINGS

As indicated earlier, the major thrust of this paper is to assess the extent to which the Zimbabwean education system has responded to the call for the mainstreaming of gender in the education system from both policy point of view as well as practical point of view. The findings from a review of previous researches, document analyses and interviews with identified stakeholders are reported below.

The National Gender Policy

In order to appreciate the nature of gender policies in Zimbabwe, a number of documents were accessed and analyzed. These included the National Gender Policy, Girl Empowerment Movement (GEM), Boy Empowerment Movement (BEM), Gender Resource Book for Teachers and Gender Sensitivity- Hand Book for School Heads, Ministry of Education Circular Minute P. 35 and Minute P22, Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture Annual Report 2011, among others. The documents gleaned established that the Zimbabwe Government has clearly enunciated gender policies supported by well-articulated principles, goals and objectives. The following information considered pertinent to this study was teased out:

Policy Principles

- i. Gender discrimination is a serious impediment to development that affects the whole country and thus needs to be eliminated through appropriate individual and collective strategies.
- ii. All Government policies must acknowledge women and men as equal and important human resources for development. This equality and equity of women and men is anchored on the protection and respect of the individual.

Goals of the Policy

- i. To mainstream gender in all aspects of the development process.
- ii. To ensure sustainable equity, equality and empowerment of women and men in Zimbabwe in all spheres of life.

Objectives of the Policy

- i. Mainstream gender issues into all sectors in order to eliminate all negative economic, social and cultural practices that impede equality and equity of the sexes.
- ii. Promote equal advancement of women and men in all sectors (The National Gender Policy, 2-3).

The data given above indicate a commitment by the Zimbabwean Government to address gender equality through gender mainstreaming, at least at policy level. However, having sound policies on the ground is one thing while implementation of those policies could be another thing altogether.

Zimbabwe's Efforts towards Enhancing Gender Equity

Document analysis revealed that Zimbabwe introduced what was termed the Girl Empowerment Movement (GEM), a worldwide movement which was launched in Zimbabwe on 20 August 2004. This was a major milestone in the country's quest towards the advancement of the girl child's rights at a broad level. To spearhead the movement's goals and objectives, a resource pack was produced, based on the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Education Act, the National Policy on Gender, and the Zimbabwe National Strategic Plan for the Education of the Girls, among other policy documents.

The introduction of this resource pack can be considered a positive development since the information contained had the potential to empower the girl child through the various activities outlined, which include how to handle or deal with relationships, peer pressure, substance abuse, HIV and AIDS and understanding gender. However, critics query, though, the effectiveness of what they consider a 'stand – alone' measure towards gender mainstreaming. A follow-up to GEM led to yet another measure with the acronym BEM (The Boy Empowerment Movement), which dealt with issues to do with boys. The two efforts, while well intended, had the weakness of approaching gender issues from a truncated and fragmented front, dealing with girl child issues and boy child issues separately. A more ideal approach would be to address gender issues affecting girls and boys concurrently and in a comprehensive manner. Also, observations on the ground indicated that the activities of both movements outlined above were not quite visible since they were mostly confined to urban centers. Also, it was noted that both material and human resources to spearhead the movements were grossly inadequate and, therefore, the impact of the movements was barely noticeable.

Another move more specific to education, was the production of a document entitled “Gender Resource Book for Teachers and Gender Sensitivity - Hand Book for Headmasters” that was launched by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. The materials in the document were developed mainly to deal with gender issues in education, focusing on School Heads as the curriculum implementation supervisors at school level. The document contained comprehensive and detailed information, clearly outlining key gender concepts and issues relevant to education. However, more than ten years since these documents were developed, observations based on the situation in schools in terms of both pupils and teachers textbooks and other resource materials do not show much evidence of concerted effort to deal with gender stereotyping and discrimination.

The Ministry of Education followed – up these documents with Circulars Minute P. 22 and Minute P. 35. The latter, which was meant for secondary school students, outlines the various offences that warrant culprits to be excluded from school, and these offences include aggression, drug abuse, sexual offences which include cases of pregnancies. The disturbing aspect about this instrument is the stipulation that school girls who fall pregnant are excluded from school and they are never readmitted, yet some of the boys who could be responsible for the pregnancies, and are technically guilty as well, are never excluded from school. This discrimination against the girl child hampers efforts towards effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. The initiative by the Kenyan Government is something worth emulating and implementing. The Kenyan Ministry of Education, on recognizing the negative impact of teenage pregnancy on girl education, put in place the ‘return to school’ policy guidelines in the mid-1990s to ensure that girls who become pregnant while at school got a second chance (MOE 1994, Mpesha 2000, CSA Report 2008 in Apondi, Kimenia and Ryanga, 2011).

Minute P.35 explicitly outlines disciplinary measures that are taken against pupils who misbehave in school. What can be considered positive about this instrument is the fact that girls are not supposed to be subjected to corporal punishment. This can be described as ‘positive discipline’, whose effect is to contribute to the retention of girls in school. This important aspect is closely linked to some of the Asian Development Bank’s 2001 checklists for gender mainstreaming, for example, development of relevant curricula, building suitable infrastructure for girls and being sensitive to their needs, just to mention a few.

Some statistical data may assist in establishing whether the policies outlined above are having any impact in terms of advancing the participation levels of the girl child who has traditionally been disadvantaged, particularly in terms of access to education. Mavhunga, Madodo and Phiri (2009) note that although notable intervention measures have been taken since Zimbabwe’s attainment of independence to narrow the participation gap between boys and girls especially at primary school level, the rate at which the gap has been narrowing has been very slow. In fact, by the year 2000, the participation gap at primary level had widened from 0,1% in 1994 to 5.1% in 2000 in favour of boys (see table 1 below).

Table 1. Evolution of Net Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education in Zimbabwe

<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Both</i>
1994	81.8	81.9	81.9
1998	86.7	82.8	84.7
1999	90.4	87.9	89.2
2000	95.1	90.0	92.5

Source: National Action Plan of Zimbabwe in Mavhunga, Madondo and Phiri (2009:38)

A number of reasons were cited to account for the gap, the major ones being the withdrawal from school of school girls to take care of sick parents who would have succumbed to HIV and AIDS or to look after siblings upon the demise of both parents owing to the disease. Society finds it very easy to sacrifice the education of the girl child under such circumstances.

However, more recent statistics indicate a new twist in enrolment patterns, with a positive skew towards increased girl child participation. For instance, Dyanda (2010) reports that the gross primary school enrolment ratios for the period 2000-2007 were 87% for boys and 88% for girls. The Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture Annual Report (2011) reports that 140 711 girls as compared to 137 373 boys sat for Grade 7 examinations in 2011, indicating a difference of 1.2% in favor of girls. This shows a marked reversal of the picture depicted earlier in that a bigger percentage of girls were enrolled in primary school than there were boys. This can be attributed to policy measures that were described earlier in this paper.

While there seems to be something to celebrate in terms of gender mainstreaming at primary school level, Dyanda (op cit) presents a different picture at secondary school level. She reports that the gross secondary school enrolment ratios dropped to 42% for boys and 39% for girls respectively over the same period, 2000 to 2007. What this implies is that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to address issues that impede the transitioning of the girl child from primary to secondary school.

At tertiary level, statistics indicate that in the period 2000 to 2009, the average participation of females in TVET was 40% as compared to 60% for male. However, there has been a positive trend in female enrolments with a gradual increase from 37% in 2006 to 44% in 2009. The same situation obtains at university level where, although the participation of females is still way below that of males, there has been a gradual steady increase in the involvement of females. Notes the Higher and Tertiary Education Baseline study, 1999; SARUA, (2008), "At universities, females comprised just fewer than 40% generally and were even lower in science and technology related areas" Commenting on the negative skew of enrolment figures against females, Dyanda (2010:) says;

Some universities have waived entry points to take females with lower scores than their male counterparts but within a reasonable range. Institutions argue that some female students have less time to study at home because of the many house chores they have to do. Therefore, the lower points female students may bring to university on entry may not be a true reflection of their academic ability. Enrolling into university where accommodation exists gives them more time to use libraries and study.

The only positive statistic in favor of female participation at tertiary level is what Dyanda (2010) refers to as a 'definite trend that has formed in which more female students register to train as teachers than male students'. Could it be because of the traditionally held stereotype that teaching is regarded as a women's profession, one wonders?

Through formal interviews with Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture officials, the interviewed officials acknowledged the efforts by the Zimbabwean Government to see gender mainstreaming in education coming into fruition. This view is consistent with one expressed in the Ministry's 2011 Annual Report which states, "Zimbabwe is one of the few countries in the region that can boast of having achieved almost gender parity in primary education" (Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture Annual Report 2011 p 8).

The interviewed Ministry officials, however, noted with concern that lack of resources, both material and human, were hampering noble efforts to attain gender parity in education. The GEM and BEM were some of the movements which were said not to be as vibrant as they were supposed to be because of lack of resources for implementation. The officials, however,

reiterated that gender mainstreaming is a process and, as a result, its products are supposed to be monitored gradually.

Further interviews were conducted with academics at a university that was established in the country to promote access to university education by women. The interviewees stated the following regarding gender mainstreaming:

- a. The University's policy clearly stipulates that 85% women and 15% men should be enrolled for every programme offered at the university.
- b. The university's curriculum is gender mainstreamed.
- c. Every student, regardless of the programme s/he is studying, takes a course in gender studies.
- d. The university is working towards establishing a gender center.
- e. The University offers scholarships to women students only and these scholarships are in two categories, that is, those offered on merit (sponsored by Econet Wireless and ZWRC) and those offered by ACBF on grounds of poverty or lack.

The interview also yielded the information that although members of staff are recruited on merit, they all undergo a gender sensitization workshop as part of their orientation package. As a result, the university boasts of great achievements as some of the prominent women including some ministers have obtained their degrees from this institution.

Informal discussions and observations indicate that other state universities apply what they call 'affirmative action' that deliberately favors female students at the recruitment stage.. This is quite encouraging as research has shown that women have been 'short changed' since time immemorial as far as education is concerned. This means that states, Zimbabwe included, should continue working out strategies to ensure that gender mainstreaming in education is effectively implemented.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings presented above show that Zimbabwe has a sound policy framework in support of gender mainstreaming in all facets of life, education included. This is quite in line with United Nations Millennium Development Goal Number 3 which calls for total elimination of gender disparities across the globe by 2015. Findings also show that in terms of access, gender parity has been attained at primary school level, with more girls in school than boys, which reflects the gender composition in the country's population where there are about 52% females as compared to 48% males (Dyanda, 2010). In spite of this positive outlook, findings also indicate that a gap exists between male and female enrolment figures at secondary and tertiary education levels in favor of males. This creates a vicious cycle where the nation ends up with very few women in key posts and decision making boards because of limited higher education qualifications. This also tends to perpetuate society's attitude towards women, viewing them as less capable than men when it comes to top jobs in the nation, which militates against the attainment of *unhu (ubuntu) hwamadzimai* (women's dignity and status).

If gender mainstreaming is to yield the much needed result in education in Zimbabwe, the Government could, in addition to the policies on the ground, also take a leaf from the Asian Development Bank's gender mainstreaming strategies in education outlined earlier, where a check-list is put in place as a basis for more serious gender analysis, monitoring and evaluation. Measures should also be put in place for positive discrimination in favour of women regarding offering of scholarships and bursaries for girls and women at secondary

and tertiary education levels where females are lagging behind. Non – Governmental Organizations such as Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), Gender Equity in Education Project (GEEP), Shamwari Dze Vana Ve Zimbabwe, the Child Survival Foundation, among others, did quite a commendable job in raising the percentage of girls reaching Grade 7 in the 1990s (Mavhunga, Madondo and Phiri 2009) and such efforts should now be focused at secondary and tertiary levels of education. Finally, vestiges of cultural traditions that continue to militate against education of girls, particularly in some remote parts of the country and among some religious sects need to be continually countered through normative re-educative strategies that seek to change such attitudes.

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