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EVALUATION OF THE NZIRAMASANGA REPORT OF INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE, 1999: THE CASE OF GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper evaluated recommendations of the Nziramasanga Report as these recommendations relate to gender equity in education in Zimbabwe from 2000 to 2010. A desk review design, in which several documents were perused, was adopted for the study. A gender mainstreaming and empowerment framework built on three critical pillars, that is, parity, equity and equality was utilised. The successes of the report's recommendations were based on the achievements of government and other gender equity stakeholders in formulating policies and strategies intended to bring about gender equity in the education sector. In this evaluation process, the paper revealed that a number of successes have been realised. These include the National Gender Policy and its Implementation Strategy. An amendment to the Education Act in 2004 was made with a view to addressing and promoting gender equity in Education. Gender parity in primary schools has been achieved whilst in secondary schools it is about to be achieved. However, at tertiary level, gender disparities in enrolment are still a challenge. 'Feminisation' of teacher education is now a reality as opportunities have been availed to female as well as male students to train as teachers. Engendering the curriculum is a process that has started. However teachers in the school system are not yet using gender responsive pedagogy, neither are textbooks used in schools all gender sensitive. Policies such as those allowing maternity and paternity leave for girls who fall pregnant and boys, who are responsible for impregnating these girls respectively, though meeting with a lot of resistance, are also an example of an implementation success. However, the school and the community still require gender sensitisation to handle issues of girl pregnancies in a more humane way. Other challenges include religion and culture as inhibitive factors for the girl child and Affirmative Action Policies not being strictly followed up. By and large successes have been scored and challenges have been encountered in the implementation of gender equity recommendations. However, a lot more could be done by both government and other gender equity stakeholders to ensure that there is equal access of both males and females to educational facilities, resources and provisions that the country offers.

Key Words: Evaluation, Gender parity, Gender equity, Gender equality

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe, as a member of regional and international committees has signed, ratified and acceded to several declarations, conventions and protocols targeted at creating an enabling environment for the attainment of gender equity and gender equality. The country's commitment to social justice therefore is evident in its signing, ratifying and acceding to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Southern African Development Community's Declaration on Gender and Development. Gender mainstreaming has become a strategy of the country to bring about gender equity and ultimately gender equality through education. To establish the extent to which the strategy is being implemented, an evaluation of the recommendations of the Presidential Commission of inquiry into Education and Training with specific reference to Gender Equity in Education forms the basis of this paper.

Background and Purpose

In January 1998, a 12 member committee under Chairperson Dr. Caiphas Nziramasanga was appointed by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, to inquire into the country's entire education system. Term of reference 2.1.2 of the enquiry mandated the Committee to "address more specifically on specific areas in the education and training systems requiring reform on short-term, medium-term and long-term basis (Government of Zimbabwe, 1999). A plethora of educational matters were explored in great detail culminating in a comprehensive 644- page report published and presented to the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe in August 1999. The commission's report contained findings, challenges and recommendations which were far reaching and were expected to guide educational reform at all levels into the new millennium for a considerable length of time. In view of this report, this paper reviews a chapter in the Nziramasanga Report, titled 'Gender Equity in Education' (Chapter 9, pages 172 to 192). Term of reference 1.5 of the enquiry mandated the committee "To enquire into and report on the issue of gender and gender equity as regards access to education at all levels and the formulation of appropriate remedial measures" (Government of Zimbabwe, 1999). The paper therefore, explores the implementation successes of the recommendations of the chapter on Gender and Equity in Education, challenges encountered in the implementation of the recommendations and opportunities that have availed themselves in the process.

Evaluation Methodology and Framework

The evaluation of the Nziramasanga Commission on gender equity in education was designed as a desk review, based on available information. A desk review is a review by the evaluator of the existing documentation related to the subject to be evaluated. Several documents were reviewed, covering the period between 2000 and 2010. Among the documents that were perused were: published and unpublished research reports, research articles on gender equity and gender equality, girls' education and related issues. Also perused were policy papers, government circulars and

guidelines. All the documents were reviewed through gender lenses. The documents included those that dealt specifically with gender parity and gender equity issues in education.

The Evaluation Framework

The evaluation utilised a gender mainstreaming and empowerment framework. The framework is built on three critical pillars, that is, parity, equity and equality. Parity in education refers to equivalent percentages of women and men as well as girls and boys in an education system, relative to the population per age group. A focus on gender parity allows for identification of numerical gaps between women and men, boys and girls in terms of their participation in the education system, whether as students, teachers, lecturers or education leaders. Gender parity allows for specificity and hard evidence on the extent of the gender equity problem. Parity is indicated by a gender parity index, which is a socio-economic index usually designed to measure the relative access to education of males and females. Gender parity index is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education, be it primary, secondary or tertiary. Although a parity focus helps to describe the situation and highlight the gender equity problems, it does not necessarily contribute to the levelling of the education playing fields for women and men as well as girls and boys. In other words, parity is essential but is not sufficient for advancing gender equality (United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2010). To move towards gender equality application of the concept gender equity becomes important.

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men as well as girls and boys. Gender equity denotes fairness of treatment of women and men, as well as girls and boys, according to their respective needs. It draws attention to the strategic actions, including policy and systemic actions that result in fair treatment of both females and males, in terms of realisation of their rights, access to benefits, obligations and opportunities. To ensure fairness, measures must be taken to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women as well as girls operating on a level education playing field with men and boys.

Equity is a means to an end; equality is the goal. Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of gender in educational opportunities as well as in the allocation of educational resources. It is therefore the full exercise by women and men as well as girls and boys to their right to education. If, for example, a country has the same percentage of girls and boys who enrol and finish secondary education, then the country has gender equality. Gender equality also embodies the idea that every human being is free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by gender stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. It does not mean that men and women as well as boys and girls should be the same but their rights to education, their responsibilities and their educational opportunities should not depend on whether they are born male or female. In this paper education is at the centre of the evaluation exercise. Education is a fundamental human right. Education is also a strategy for the realisation of other rights, including the achievement of gender equality. It is therefore important to identify the barriers imbedded in

deep-rooted discriminatory patriarchal ideologies, attitudes and practices that; frustrate implementation of gender equity policies, practices that fail to document the reality on the ground, practices that are resistant to gender mainstreaming and therefore to attainment of the gender equality goal in and through education (United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2010).

Review of a Recommendation to Do With Gender Parity

There is only one recommendation that focuses on gender parity in the evaluation under focus. This is the recommendation on compulsory education to ensure equal access by both girls and boys. Universal education was guaranteed at Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, particularly at primary school level. However, in times of financial stress, parents have been seen to prefer to send boys to school at the expense of girls, arguing that girls are transitory, whilst boys are an insurance policy in parents' old age. That patriarchal preference for educating boys at the expense of girls has denied girls unfettered access to schooling from pre-school to tertiary education. However implementation of this recommendation has, to some extend been done in Zimbabwe. Gender parity has been achieved in primary school enrolment. By 1990, the Gender Parity Index was fluctuating between a GPI of 0, 96 and 0, 98. Since the 2000s, gender parity at primary school level has been maintained (United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2010). However, the literacy rate is higher in males at 90 percent than among females at 80 percent. Women still constitute the majority of the illiterates in both rural and urban areas (The literacy ratio was, according to the 2002 Population census, 61 percent male to 39 percent female, in urban areas and 69 percent male to 31 percent female, in rural areas (United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2010). At Universities, the proportion of females almost doubled from about 24,8 percent in 1980 to 49 percent by 2009 (Chung, 2009). At teacher education colleges, there has been a "feminisation" of teacher training institutions. The percentage of women students increased from 43, 5 percent in 1990 to 69, 2 percent in 2009. Available data indicates a gender parity index that has consistently been in favour of women primary teacher trainees at least since 2005 (United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2010). The progress made is also evident in the increased enrolment levels of female students in teacher education. As shown in the table below, females surpassed males in teacher education colleges.

Evolution of Female Enrolment in Teacher Education 2001 – 2003

TYPE		2001			2003		
		Male	Female	% Female	Male	Female	%Female
Teacher Colleges	Education	8 121	9 328	53%	8 660	10 233	54%

Source: The Ministries of Education (2004).

There is no doubt that this has been an implementation success of the recommendation under focus. The challenge is, though the gender gap has been reducing, men still constitute the majority of the student population at all tertiary institutions put together. . In 1985, only 31percent of the 30 800 students enrolled at tertiary institutions were women. By 2006, the proportion of females at this level had risen to 37 percent. At universities it had almost doubled from about 24,8 percent in 1980

to 40 percent by 2009 Another challenge is that despite 'feminization' of the teaching profession, educational leadership still remains a male domain. Most school management systems are male dominated with leadership positions of head, deputy head, heads of academic departments and student leaders being men. In Zimbabwe, for instance, teaching has remained a male dominated profession, as shown by the fact that in 2003, the 15% women secondary school heads in the country were drawn from only 42% women secondary school teachers. The figures at primary school level were even more disproportionate; with only 5% of the school heads being female, drawn from a 50% female teaching force nationwide (Chipunza, 2003; Chung, 2009); (Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI), 2009). Most of the recommendations in the chapter under focus are within the framework of gender equity. These are reviewed in the order of subheadings below.

Amendment of the Constitution and the Education Act to Address and Promote Gender Equity

The basis for gender equality and equity in education in Zimbabwe include the Constitution and the Education Act. A constitutional review process is currently underway. Women's and gender lobby groups have been advocating for the removal of "claw back" clauses of the current Constitution that allow customary law to take precedence if in conflict with the non-discrimination clause. It is hoped that the new constitution will form the basis for gender equality and equity if it succeeds in removing the "claw back" close. The new constitution may not necessarily be a direct response to the call for amendment of the constitution by the commission but the fact that the constitution is being reviewed after this recommendation, this might influence those who read this particular recommendation to input into the new constitution issues pertaining to gender equity and gender equality. In 2004, the Education Act was amended and harmonised with the National Gender Policy, to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender. The amendment allowed for the prosecution of violators. Violations are punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment of up to one year (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2004; United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2010), (Government of Zimbabwe, 2004).

Over and above the review of the constitution and the amendment of the Education Act, a National Gender Policy was introduced in 2004. Whilst debate about drawing up of a national policy had started just after the Beijing Conference in 1995, there is no doubt that the Commission's recommendation calling for gender equity and gender equality could have expedited the crafting of the policy. Furthermore the fact that the National Gender Policy was published five years after the commission had made this recommendation shows that to some extent the policy is a product of the recommendation of the Commission. The National Gender Policy provides the broad framework for the mainstreaming of gender into various sectors including education. The policy proposes fourteen strategies for the achievement of gender equality in education. The critical observation made in the policy is that the education and training sector poses a big challenge to the eradication of gender imbalances and inequality since it is the foundation of economic and social development (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2004). Over and above the National Gender Policy, a National Gender

Policy Implementation Strategy has been put in place for the implementation of the National Gender Policy.

Sensitisation Campaigns For Stakeholders on the Importance of Educating Girls and Changing Cultural Beliefs and Practices Hindering Equal Participation of Males and Females in Education

The above recommendation was to be realised through equitable sharing of educational resources between males and females. The recommendation was also to be realised through giving all students equal opportunities to tackle whatever subjects or courses they preferred regardless of gender. Policy P 77, was introduced to enforce the recommendation. One of the effects of P77 was to provide greater gender equality in subject selection and educational paths by ensuring equal access, by girls and boys, to all subjects including technical/vocational subjects (SACMEQ, 2011). There was also need for positive role models for females and gender balance in all text books and other teaching and learning materials. On this aspect, Dudu *et al.* (2008) examined the extent to which four 'O' level English Text books currently used in Zimbabwean schools were gender sensitive. Their research showed that women were largely invisible in the texts as revealed by the titles of passages, pictures and illustrations, extracts of passages and poems, in all of which a male perspective was dominant. Where women featured, they revealed, they were, in most cases, portrayed negatively. To date, there is no balance between male and female models in instructional materials. The textbooks that are used are mostly, if not all, male authored. The theories or philosophies that are quoted and made reference to are male centred. Cementing, as it were, the idea that women should be academically subordinate to men (Chirimuuta, 2006). In as much as sensitisation campaigns could be carried out on the importance of educating girls, teachers are however not fully conversant with the proposed methodology of gender mainstreaming and their knowledge of gender issues is too basic to warrant effective implementation (Chinyani, 2010). Whilst efforts are being made to ensure the success of equity in education, the challenge is that, this is being done in a patriarchal societal system which is firmly entrenched within culture, religion and socialisation process reinforced by the male gender biased education system. Both religion and culture emphasize the dominance of men over women and socialise women into subordinate roles (Gender Scoping Study Report, 2007).

Adoption of Interventions to Bridge the Gender Gap

This recommendation was to be realised through creating more spaces and opportunities for girls and women in schools and tertiary institutions. Affirmative action policies were introduced to increase female enrolment in tertiary education following the recommendations of the 1999 Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry. The government adopted a quota system whereby it admits female students with lower entry points in universities and other institutions of higher learning. At the secondary school level, girls are allowed to enrol into science subjects with lower points than boys. Improved safety and security for girls has been made possible by cutting down the walking

distance to and from school. By 2007, the furthest walking distance had reduced to less than five kilometres (United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2010).

School girls falling pregnant to be assisted to continue with their education after giving birth or being offered non-formal education alternatives and abusers of girls and women in educational institutions to be severely penalised and enforceable legal instruments to be put in place

These recommendations were to be implemented through policy circular guidelines on prevention and management of teenage pregnancy in schools. (MoESC, 2000). The recommendation on girls falling pregnant has been enforced through P35 policy, which focuses on issues of discipline. One of the effects of P35 is to provide continued access to schooling to girls who become pregnant while at school. In actual fact, in schools, girls who fall pregnant are allowed maternity leave whilst boys who are found to impregnate them go on paternity leave. (MoESC, 2010; SACMEQ, 2011). This re-entry policy has met with resistance from authorities and communities on the one hand, and gender activists on the other (Chirimuuta, 2006; Thabete, 2009); (Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI), 2009). The implementation of the policy has not been systematically monitored making an assessment of its impact difficult. The education stakeholders who know about the policy have made informal observations, that pregnant learners were not expelled from school. Furthermore it has also been noted that there has been no sensitisation of the regulations on management of school girl pregnancy to stakeholders in most educational institutions in Zimbabwe (Runhare and Vandeyer, 2011). However in all tertiary institutions girls who get pregnant are allowed to continue with their course after delivery.

The challenge faced in the implementation of this recommendation is that the girl is never empathized with is the Zimbabwean society at large views teenage pregnancy as resulting from deviance, and immorality. Teenage pregnancy is condemned, and in reality, this condemnation by no means affects men. Even though the policy accords the pregnant teenager the right to continue with her education until she completes her courses, the girl is ostracised and castigated for allowing herself to be abused. The girl really goes to hell with all the jeering, laughing, and giggling from fellow students (Chirimuuta, 2006). The need for sensitisation across the whole spectrum of the school community, that is; students, teachers, administrators, non-teaching staff and the community at large becomes paramount. Furthermore counselling services could be provided, however, schools are not yet capacitated with expertise to carry out such duties. On the other hand, the use of corporal punishment in Zimbabwe has a gender dimension. It is recommended as a disciplinary measure in Policy Circular 35, but to be used only on boys. In practice, it is reportedly widespread and applied on both genders. (United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2010).

A Gender Balanced Education Curriculum

This recommendation could be achieved through opportunities existing for gender mainstreaming of the Zimbabwean education system, in the proposed curriculum review process. It is critical that a

gender perspective is built into the process, through a vetting checklist, so that the outcomes of the review are gender responsive and cater for the needs of both girls and boys so that they may be prepared to participate better in the socio-economic development of their country while realising their right to quality education. There is awareness among curriculum developers at MoESAC that gender biases must be removed from text books. Towards this end, the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) has been tasked with vetting the content of all text books and examinations for gender stereotyping, and advising the text-book writers, publishers and examinations' items developers on how to eliminate the biases and develop gender responsive materials. However there is an urgent need to review the vetting checklist to ensure that the tool is able to identify all dimensions of gender biases in the textbooks, assessments and other teaching materials. There is also a need to put in place regular, periodic gender sensitisation and training opportunities for curriculum developers, publishers, text-book writers and examinations' developers. One opportunity for this to be done is through the UNICEF managed Education Transition Funds to ensure that all new books that are printed meet the gender test.

Efforts to realise a gender sensitive curriculum can be realised through introducing a gender responsive pedagogy in teacher education colleges (Mawere, 2013). The Forum for African Women Educationalists (Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI), 2009) recently supported the piloting of the Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) programme in one teacher training college (Belvedere). This project is now ready for roll out. Gender analysis of the Belvedere Teacher Training College policy and practices confirmed findings of earlier research on gender mainstreaming of the education sector: the capacity of educational personnel and teacher trainers for gender responsive teaching, training and practices is low. They have plans to scaling it up to five other colleges. The project's main focus is on advocacy on gender mainstreaming through gender responsive educational programmes, capacity building for mainstreaming gender responsiveness into educational policies, plans and teacher training. This is a great opportunity for mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment concepts and practices in both primary and secondary teacher education institutions. Resources must be available for this strategic intervention so that gender responsive pedagogy training in pre-service and in-service programmes are institutionalised and conducted systematically in a coordinated way and with support from the government (United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2010).

However there are challenges: curriculum planners must also ensure that there is an attempt at equitable representation of models within textbooks and among authors, and other resource materials. Currently there are very few female models in instructional materials. Most textbooks are male authored. Chirimuuta (2006), rightly advises that it is the responsibility of curriculum planners to ensure that, where female thinkers have made contributions to scholarship, their works are added to the list of sources for instructional material, in order to provide the missing female input. Furthermore women should be encouraged to write textbooks and novels for female students to have role models. Such female authors will then be featured and quoted in the written works of

students. Special projects introduced by Government to help girls perform better in Mathematics, Science and Information and Computer Technology; National and international Non-Governmental Organisations and Funding Agencies to support and promote general and or specialised areas in women's education to increase women's participation and achievement at all levels as well as encouragement of both public and private sectors and institutions, by government, to implement gender equity programmes and activities and annually account for progress.

These recommendations have been reviewed together as there is an overlap in so far as what has been done is concerned. The introduction of maths and science camps for girls is aimed at addressing gender stereotypes in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics areas. Affirmative Action Policies (AAP) also exist at institutions of higher learning to increase female enrolment at these institutions. In high schools, girls are allowed to enrol in science subjects with two points or lower as compared to boys as stated elsewhere in this paper.

Basic Educational Assistance Module (BEAM) programme is one of the various social protections that government is providing to vulnerable groups through different ministries. Investment in the most vulnerable through Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is one strategy that has been instituted. The BEAM addresses the issue of high drop out of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) girls by integrating gender equity in its guiding principles by stating that "At least 50 percent of (all) assisted children should be girls" (GoZ, 2001). Since its inception in 2001, BEAM has managed to reduce the number of children who drop out of school due to failure to pay fees. BEAM is administered by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture and is implemented through local authorities. To date, over 4, 000,000 students have benefited from BEAM. Amongst universities, the Midlands State University has strived to promote gender equity with a view to achieving gender equality. In line with the university's mission statement, the institution has developed a Gender Policy, which has seen the University responding positively to gender concerns. This has been done through the establishment of a Gender Centre responsible for the teaching of a gender module across the curriculum. A Gender Committee has been put in place to monitor the implementation of the University's Gender Policy through affirmative action in the admission of students and the recruitment of staff. The University is aiming at achieving a male to female ratio of 48-52 in the staff and student population in order to match the national population ratio.

Setting up a Gender Equity Council or Commission to monitor and advice on the implementation of gender equity practices in both public and private sectors' activities and programmes and facilitating the monitoring of progress in gender equity initiatives

There is nothing that has been done as yet to realise the recommendation on the setting up of a Gender Equity Council. However plans are under way to establish a Commission on Gender Equality in Zimbabwe, adopting lessons learnt from the South African experience (Malaba, 2006).

On the recommendation of facilitating the monitoring of progress in gender equity issues, the statistical office, the Ministry/ Ministries of Education and all educational institutions ought to keep up-to-date gender desegregated statistics reflecting provision of resources, funding levels, enrolments, retention, transition, subject areas and achievement. On the statistical office mandate, to buttress the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies that seek to promote gender equality and equity, up to date and reliable statistical information is required. This has led to an increase in demand for gender statistics. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) is the official producer of statistics in Zimbabwe. Gender statistics has been institutionalised by the CSO by the creation of a Gender Statistics section under the charge of a full time statistician. Gender statistics are obtained from routine censuses and surveys and also from administrative records such as those from Educational Management Information System (EMIS), that is, from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture which provides detailed statistics on education (Malaba, 2006).

Way Forward

The paper has shown that a number of implementation successes have been achieved in the decade 2000 to 2010. These include the introduction of the National Gender Policy, and the National Gender Policy Implementation Strategy. An amendment to the Education Act in 2004 was made with a view to addressing and promoting gender equity in Education. Gender parity in primary schools has become a reality. In secondary schools, gender parity is about to be realised. However, at tertiary level, gender disparities in enrolment are still a challenge. 'Feminisation' of teacher education could be viewed as another success scored given that female representation in teaching has tilted females' favour. Opportunities have been availed to female as well as male students to train as teachers. Men may cry foul over this tilt of balance and complain that their space in teacher education, particularly at Primary level is shrinking. This situation may also end up being a gender issue. Engendering the curriculum has been one of the implementation success stories with calls being made to even up the curriculum playing field. However teachers in the school system are not yet using gender responsive pedagogy, neither are textbooks being used in schools all gender sensitive. Policies such as those allowing maternity and paternity leave for girls who fall pregnant and boys who are responsible for impregnating, though meeting with a lot of resistance, are also an example of an implementation success. However, the school and the community still require gender sensitisation to handle such cases in a more humane way rather that subject pregnant girls to dehumanising treatment. Setting up of a Gender Equity Council is one recommendation which is still to see the light of day. Implementation of this recommendation will go a long way to have a monitoring mechanism in place to check on progress in so far as gender equity initiatives are concerned.

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