

Gender Equity in South African Higher Education Leadership: Where Are We Twenty Years After Democracy?

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ABSTRACT Gender equity (GE) in relation to the representation of women forms part of policy within South African legislature, as part of a democratic society. Despite GE policy, leadership within Higher Education (HE) is still male dominated. This paper reflects on a desktop review of 23 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa, looking at selected middle and top management levels, as presented on their websites. The findings reveal that gender equity is not practiced within HE leadership and suggest that HE leadership is male dominated; with the glass ceiling a reality for women. A discussion based on a literature review is presented, reflecting that cultural and structural conditions and practices impact on GE leadership in HEIs. It is recommended that HEIs need to be challenged to review leadership and characteristics, and that they should be leaders in changing the perspectives of leadership and the role and place of women in society.

INTRODUCTION

Research suggests that globally, and within South Africa, gender equity in higher education is still a major challenge that warrants attention, as women are not equal to their male counterparts. A number of researchers have reviewed the number of women in vice-chancellor positions, and the findings reflect that globally men are still dominating these positions (Ballenger and Austin 2007; Kamassah 2010; Dobebe et al. 2014; Morley 2014). Norway is one of the few countries that has achieved a 32 per cent female vice chancellor rate (Morley 2014:118). A way of measuring “employment equity advancement” is an “increased representation of marginalized groups in senior management positions” (Kamassah 2010:1). It is evident that globally women have reached the glass-ceiling, “artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational biases that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organizations into managerial-level positions”, according to the U.S. Department of Labor [sic] in 1991 (as cited in Ballenger and Austin 2007:1). As women are under-represented globally in the executive lev-

el of higher education management, it has negative implications in terms of decision-making, and the under-utilisation of skills and expertise of a large and “significant part of the HE workforce” (Morley 2013). Within the South African context, Shambare (2011) notes that “South African universities’ impact on gender-specific development at the local level is yet to gather momentum”. A 2014 report by Wessels, based on men’s and women’s opinions reflected on “VotingAid” as to whether the South African “government is doing enough towards empowering women”, it is significant that 36 per cent of women agree as compared to 56 per cent of men.

Theoretical Framework: Social Justice

This study is framed within a social justice perspective, a philosophy espoused by Rawls in 1972 (as cited in Ballenger and Austin 2007). Rawls viewed social justice as an ethical framework, allowing equal access and fair opportunities to all under conditions which facilitated “equality of fair opportunity”. It is a “shifting concept”, depending “upon the context in which it is used” (Ballenger and Austin 2007). In education, Adams et al. (1997), (as cited in Ballenger and Austin 2007: 4-5), defined social justice as a process and a goal, namely, the “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs”. The vision is that within society there is “equitable” “distribution of resources” and all “members”

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“are physically and psychologically safe and secure”. The process is “democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and human capacities for working collaboratively to create change”. The emphasis is on “moral values, justice, respect, care and equity”. South Africa has had “a powerful agenda for social justice” which has “shaped the re-composition of the state and bureaucracy”. However, simultaneously, “new discourses of leadership undermining the position of women have emerged” (Chisholm 2001: 387).

Why the Glass Ceiling?

Chisholm (2001: 396) cites Blackmore (1993), and argues that the “constructs of leadership denied the private realm and the connections between public and private life”. She argues that leadership is viewed as “competence” and “performance”, with masculine traits being favoured. In leadership, the successful separation of public and private meets with approval, and “undermines the goals of transformation of public and private life”. Chisholm (2001: 388) cites research that time and time again indicates that although women in South Africa, as in other countries, “have to date dominated the educational profession” they are still a minority in its “leadership and management”. She argues that organisational culture, and structural conditions, as highlighted in previous research, still favours a masculine view of leadership. Her research conducted in a Provincial Department of Education (Gauteng, one of South Africa’s nine Provinces), concludes that “the particularly raced and gendered character of the organisational culture and discourses of leadership” shaped the environment in which men and women worked... Dominant constructs of leadership framed by a concept of the “colour of competence” had its correlative in the “gender of competence”. Women thus “struggled against masculinist and racist concepts of what constituted leadership” (Chisholm 2001: 398). The “glass ceiling” and lack of implementation of gender equity despite legislation, is highlighted by De la Rey (as cited in a Higher Education Conference Report 2008), indicating that a “lack of understanding of the complexity of gender discrimination in institutions, has led to lack of implementation and women gender discrimination. “If understandings of good leadership are based on constructs of mas-

culinity, this influences understanding of merit”, according to De la Rey, and calls for “more systematic research on factors affecting retention such as masculinities in leadership, institutional and organizational barriers, and the influences of society’s gendered cultures” (HE Conference Report 2008: 3).

Similarly, Ballenger and Austin (2007:1), in an American study, also argue that “cultural and structural conditions and practices...create barriers to and opportunities for the advancement of women in higher education leadership... attitudinal and organization biases against women in higher education tend to exclude women from upper-level leadership positions”. These biases are entrenched in “invisible barriers... lack of mentors, the good old boys’ network, gender inequalities, and slower career paths” (Ballenger and Austin 2007:15). In an Australian study, Dobeles et al. (2014:1) state that “globally, universities have much work ahead of them if they are to redress the gender imbalance in senior positions and remuneration rates”. Their research indicates that “despite policy reforms ... inequity continues to be a problem in the Australian higher education sector with implications for the recognition (and addressing) of inequity in the global higher education industry”. Dobeles et al. (2014: 457) quote Probert (2005: 50) who states that although “research acknowledges a gender imbalance”, the disparity is not redressed as there is a reluctance to “expose many of the most commonly accepted assertions to rigorous scrutiny”, thereby preventing an “understanding” of “the remarkable persistence of unequal outcomes for men and women in terms of pay and status”. Mischau (as cited in Dobeles et al. 2014: 464) states that although in “universities in most European countries” “special programmes that sought to promote women in Natural Sciences and Technology” had been established, they had not met with success, as “measured over a period of 10 years”. Mischau also found that despite the creation of “structures” “to promote the employment and career development of women, cultural variables were driving against those strategies (that is, ideas of gender roles and characteristics; male-dominated structures and content at universities)”. Alternative ways to “consider and realise complete gender equality in higher education” is yet to be found.

Morley's (2013: 116) research in her engagement "with Diana Leonard's writing on how gender is constituted in the academy" engages with a concern by Leonard "about how women can be supported to achieve their aspirations and flourish in higher education (HE), without being damaged and impeded by patriarchal practices and norms". Leonard, in numerous papers as cited by Morley (2013:117), states that "women... were absent from positions of power and influence because they lacked knowledge of the "rules of the game". Women, she argued, were often reluctant to be "involved in the competitive, self-promotional behaviour traditionally associated with dominant masculinities". Women are "encouraged...to engage with the hidden curriculum of academia, for example, the use of networks, contacts, persistence and political skills". In her concluding remarks Morley (2013: 126) cites Squires (1999) and purports that "power" has "to be theorised" and ways have to be found to "lessen the power of the male order, rather than to join the ranks". She further states that "notions" of "gender identities" are "polarised", and should rather be treated as "something that is in continual production. Factors such as "differences in age, ethnicities, disabilities, sexualities and cultural and social class locations" should also be considered in terms of power distribution. Further she suggests that studies should also cover "success stories of women accessing authority and facilitating feminist change" as well as, "the ambivalence or pleasures that many women experience" in HE. Morley suggests that "we require a re-invigorated and re-textured vocabulary and an expanded lexicon to focus on the leadership values and challenges that lie ahead for HE". These include, amongst others, "creating knowledge for a rapidly changing world". Ultimately, Morley opines that "leadership roles appear to be so over-extended that they represent a type of virility test" and that there is a need to explore "how leadership practices can become more sustainable, with concerns about health and well-being as well as competitive performance in the global arena. In other words, we need new rules for a very different game".

Women in the South African Higher Education Context

Women form the majority of the South African population (Republic of South Africa 2014),

and are critical to the growth and development of the economy, as well as general well-being of society. Women in leadership are role models in attesting to the potential and capabilities of women, in a society where there is still discrimination against the girl-child and women in terms of roles demarcated and as reflected in statistics of abuse and violence. A report in the Sunday Times of March 9 (Shevel 2014: 7), indicates that South African companies are still "falling shy of gender quotas". The report indicates that "globally, the proportion holding senior business roles has remained steady at 24 per cent....But the percentage of senior women in business is down 2 per cent". Hern as cited by Shevel (2014:7), offered a possible context in which women were likely to be promoted. This included "population demographics, urbanisation and equality of opportunity". In "countries with patriarchal societies" women "are at or near the bottom of the ratings".

In May 2003, the United States Agency International Development (USAID) through the Tertiary Education Linkages Project (TELP) (USAID 2005:7-9), did a survey on gender equity development in HE in South African, and based its findings on 17 HEIs. The report concluded that "senior management" figures (inclusive of "Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor(s), Executive Deans, Chief Directors and others" falling into this category), reflected an average of 24 per cent for women and 76 per cent for men. "Middle management" figures (inclusive of "elected and/or associate Deans, Directors in various Departments and functions"), reflected a "small increase in the average percentage: 29 per cent women and 71 per cent men". The report indicated that gender equity made "good business sense, and is not only a moral and ethical imperative". It further stated that the senior management were part of the "drivers of the strategic vision, plans and decision-making for the institution". With such a low representation of women in these "strategic categories....what is being seriously omitted are the insights, perspectives and experiences of half the population". This also may impact on institutional culture in terms of "management styles, institution's image ... priorities and decisions... practices, incentive and resources", as well as the positioning of the institution in the market.

In May 2006, Dei in the foreword of a USAID report (2006) indicated that the 2003 survey reflected "glaring disparities in gender balance

...in ... institutions". Dei also indicated that "despite the formulation of many gender policies, the implementation of these policies was still problematic for most ...institutions". A programme to address the findings of the May 2003 USAID report, was launched in September 2005, and was named Women in Higher Education Executive Leadership (WHEEL) (USAID 2006). The focus was on the empowerment of women "through training and coaching to assume executive leadership roles in higher education". A "strategic partnership" was also formed with Higher Education South Africa (HESA), to ensure the continuity of the programme. The findings of the USAID 2005 report reflected that since the 2003 survey, there had been either a marginal decrease or no change in women representation at management level (USAID 2006:40). The "underrepresentation" remained a "concern and area for targeted action".

We are now in 2015, 2014 was not just another year in South Africa. Its significance is marked by 20 years of democracy, and the adoption by the Republic of South Africa (RSA) Parliament's National Assembly of the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (WEGEB) (RSA 2013). The WEGEB calls for the progressive realisation of at least 50 percent representation of women in decision-making structures, and it aims at

improving women's access to education, training and skills development.

This paper reviewed the positions as held by women in HE leadership as identified in the USAID-TELP reports as mentioned. It analysed the positions in terms of identifying what was most common positions in order to determine whether twenty years into democracy, and given the focus in terms of policies and progressive views on women as equal members of society, what progress South African HEIs are making in terms of HE leadership.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Frame

The population of twenty-three Higher Education Universities (Table 1), formed as a result of changes brought about by the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997 as amended (RSA 2010) were utilised in the sampling frame. The sampling frame was further stratified by examination of the following positions:

- ♦ Vice chancellors (VCs)
- ♦ Deputy vice chancellors (DVCs)
- ♦ Registrars
- ♦ At senior management positions, deans, heads of schools or executive deans of faculties

Table 1: Names, abbreviations and website addresses of South African Universities

<i>Name of university</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Website</i>
Cape Peninsula University Of Technology	CPUT	www.cput.ac.za
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	NMMU	www.nmmu.ac.za
Walter Sisulu University	WSU	www.wsu.ac.za
University Of Cape Town	UCT	www.uct.ac.za
University Of The Western Cape	UWC	www.uwc.ac.za
Stellenbosch University	Stellenbosch	www.sun.ac.za
University Of Fort Hare	UFH	www.ufh.ac.za
University Of Pretoria	UP	www.up.ac.za
University Of The Orange Free State	UFS	www.ufs.ac.za
University Of Limpopo	UL	www.ul.ac.za
North West University	NWU	www.nwu.ac.za
Rhodes University	Rhodes	www.ru.ac.za
University Of Witwatersrand	WITS	www.wits.ac.za
University Of Johannesburg	UJ	www.uj.ac.za
University Of Venda	UNIVEN	www.univen.ac.za
University Of Zululand	UNIZUL	www.unizulu.ac.za
University Of South Africa	UNISA	www.unisa.ac.za
Durban University Of Technology	DUT	www.dut.ac.za
Mangosuthu University Of Tehnology	MUT	www.mut.ac.za
Tshwane University Of Technology	TUT	www.tut.ac.za
Venda University Of Technology	VUT	www.vut.ac.za
Cape University Of Technology	CUT	www.cut.ac.za
University Of Kwa-Zulu Natal	UKZN	www.ukzn.ac.za

¹ All websites in Table 1 accessed between February and March 2014.

The research focused specifically on universities, as the parameters of this paper, and an initial desktop review, as to reflect on the status quo, as reflected from a statistical perspective. Most institutions had these positions, but they differed in nomenclature. For example, the term VC or principal was common, but within some universities the term rector was also used. DVCs ranged in titles, with the most common being DVC Academic/Teaching and Learning (hereafter referred to as DVC-Academic), as well as a range of DVCs (classified as DVC-other), as the range varied amongst finance, research, transformation, infrastructure, external partnerships, and many other titles. Registrars were commonly named as such, though it was not clear in all institutions, whether the position of registrar existed. The researcher therefore chose at executive level, the positions of VC, DVC-Academic, as well as DVC-other, and Registrar, to gather and list the data. At the senior management level, most Universities had academic divisions known as faculties, though a few used terms such as campuses/colleges or schools (these were in the minority). Heads of these academic divisions in which learning programmes were offered were mostly headed by deans or executive deans, and heads of colleges or schools in the case of one or two institutions. The focus on the executive and senior management positions was set in terms of the glass ceiling challenges as previously outlined.

Determining Gender

The information was easily obtainable through university websites. Photographs and traditional westernised names also made it easier to determine gender, for the researcher, who was familiar with these names. Write-ups on the various persons in these positions also assisted in determining gender, where pronouns such as “he” and “she” or “his” and “her” were used, especially where there were no photographs available and/or the titles referred to Doctor and Professor. An internet search also assisted, using the names, initials and surnames in the case of very limited information on the website. In a few cases the researcher contacted an institution where information was vague on the website, and requested the gender of the person holding the position, explaining the reason for the requested information. This was rare (two cases), as the information was readily available on the internet. In the case of certain institu-

tions, for example, the University of Fort Hare (UFH), and Walter Sisulu University (WSU), the researcher had personal knowledge of the persons in the positions held, due to working relations with these Institutions.

At no point did the researcher interact with the Institutions to determine whether the information gathered was current, though a check on the date of update indicated that the institutional information was regularly updated (most indicated an update for a month early in 2014, namely January or February). It may be that some Institutions were still filling vacant positions, or that the positions were temporarily filled as acting positions, or that Institutions were still undergoing further academic transformation, as in the case of WSU, for example. The researcher decided that regardless of the internal factors that may influence the status quo, a realistic snapshot of the gender and number of persons occupying the various positions at that moment in time was sufficient to determine a trend in gender equity generally within SA HEIs, as the status quo could not change significantly over the period.

Treatment of the Data

Data

As the data presented itself in various forms, for example male and female (bi-nominal), and categorical data (number of male or females per category) (Table 2), a uniform data type had to be found, in order to ensure comparison of the same format, or “apples with apples”. The bi-nominal and categorical data was captured on an excel spreadsheet and recoded into percentage male, and transferred to SPSS as re-coded data. The data was thus recoded in the form of percentages of male, with 0 per cent reflecting all females within a category, 50 per cent reflecting an equal balance of male and females in a category, and 100 per cent reflecting all males in a category. This was calculated using the formula $\text{total males in category} / \text{total individuals in a category}$. In Institutions where the positions were not indicated, the category remained blank and treated by SPSS as no entry. The recoded data is reflected in Table 3.

Categories

In some instances non-mutually exclusive categories were collapsed into one category, for

Table 2: Raw data: The breakdown of executive and senior management positions within HEIs by gender

<i>Name of institution</i>	<i>Current VC/Rector</i>	<i>DVC senior/other</i>	<i>DVC academic</i>	<i>DVC research</i>	<i>DVC transform</i>	<i>DVC institutional</i>	<i>DVC student DEV and support</i>	<i>DVC international/External relations</i>	<i>Registrar</i>	<i>E/ Deans of faculties</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
CPUT	M		M	M					M	6	5	1
NMMU	M		M	F		F			M	7	5	2
WSU	M		M						M	4	4	0
UCT	M	M		M	M	F			M	7	6	1
UWC	M		M				F			6	4	2
Stellenbosch	M		M	M				M		10	8	2
UFH	M		M			M			M	5	4	1
UP	F		M	F			M		M	9	7	2
UFS	M		F	F		M		F	M	7	7	0
UL	M		M			M				4	3	1
NWU	M		M	M					F	13	10	3
Rhodes	M		M	M					M	6	5	1
WITS	M		M	M	M	F		M	F	6	4	2
UJ	M	M	F	M			M		F	9	5	4
UNIVEN	M		F			M			M	8	6	2
UNIZUL	F		M	M					M	4	3	1
UNISA	M	M	F	F	M	M	F		M	5	3	2
DUT	M		F			F		M	M	8	7	1
MUT	M		M						M	3	2	1
TUT	F		M	F		M	M		M	7	6	1
VUT	F	M				M			M	4	3	1
CUT	M		M						F	4	3	1
UKZN	M		F						M	4	3	1
Total										146	113	33

example the various DVCs (as the range varied amongst finance, research, transformation, infrastructure, external partnerships, and many other titles), which was collapsed into the category DVC-other. In the same manner most institutions had a VC/Principal/Rector, and this was categorised into a single category, with Registrar as another, and executive deans/deans/heads of colleges/schools as another.

Data Presentation and Results

The data presented in Table 3 include an overall presentation of the percentages of males occupying the positions of executive and senior management levels in the identified categories, to indicate the national status quo between February and March 2014. Overall, quantitatively the data revealed very high levels of male presence in all positions as is outlined in Table 3. The data also indicates that most positions have a percentage male occupation of 60 per

cent or more, with the exception of the University of Johannesburg (UJ) (with an average of 50 per cent and 55 per cent respectively in the DVC senior and Deans' positions). A provision of the data for selected individual institutions is also presented to indicate trends in the percentage male occupation at either executive and/or senior management level, indicating that the trajectory of leadership in higher education is still a male-prevalent domain (Table 4).

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4, which reflects descriptive data, confirms the trends represented in Table 3. An examination of these indicators indicates the highest and lowest representations of gender equity. From the data it is clear that the lowest gender equity representations within Universities include institutions such as WSU, Rhodes University and Cape University of Technology (CPUT). In the same manner, WITS University,

Table 3: The breakdown of executive and senior management positions within HEIs by gender

<i>Name of institution</i>	<i>Current VC/Rector</i>	<i>Merged DVC SNR/Academic</i>	<i>Merged all other DVC</i>	<i>Registrar</i>	<i>Deans (Faculties)</i>
CPUT	100	100	100	100	83
NMMU	100	100	0	100	71
WSU	100	100		100	100
UCT	100	100	66.6	100	86
UWC	100	100	0		66
Stellenbosch	100	100	100		80
UFH	100	100	100	100	80
UP	0	100	50	100	77
UFS	100	0	33.3	100	100
UL	100	100	100		75
NWU	100	100	100	0	77
Rhodes	100	100	100	100	83
WITS	100	100	75	0	66
UJ	100	50	100	0	55
UNIVEN	100	0	100	100	75
UNIZUL	0	100	100	100	75
UNISA	100	50	50	100	60
DUT	100	0	50	100	88
MUT	100	100	100	100	66
TUT	0	100	33.3	100	86
VUT	0	100	100	100	75
CUT	100	100	100	0	75
UKZN	100	0		100	75

2.Percentages determined by total males in category / total individuals in a category, e.g. 100 per cent =all male and 0 per cent = all female

University of Johannesburg (UJ) and Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) revealed to be amongst institutions with a fair representation of gender equity.

Examining the mean, it can be seen that WSU scored 100 per cent (all male), followed by CPUT and Rhodes (at 97.166 per cent male respectively). Stellenbosch scored 96.00 per cent male and UFH 96.66 percent male, also indicating high levels of male-orientated environments. At the other end of the scale WITS scored 73.5 per cent male, with UJ at 67.5 per cent and (TUT) at 69.88 per cent.

In terms of the standard deviation, as a measure of spread, it is once again WSU with the lowest at 0.000 as well as a variance of 0.000. UFH reflects a standard deviation of 8.164 and a variance of 66.67. CPUT has a standard deviation of 6.94 and a variance of 48.167. At the more representative Universities, UJ scored a standard deviation of 40.46 and a variance of 1637.500. WITS also had a high standard deviation of 38.9 and variance of 1513.500. If the above is summarised, it can be seen that the table indicates that Institutions within the Eastern Cape Province are currently less likely to be practicing or implementing gender equity within their Institutions with the scores for WSU, Rhodes and UFH indicating the least representative of gender equity in higher education leadership.

Table 4: Statistical analysis of percentage male in executive and senior management positions in HEIs

	<i>N stat</i>	<i>Range statistic</i>	<i>Minimum statistic</i>	<i>Maximum statistic</i>	<i>Sum statistic</i>	<i>Mean statistic</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>Std. deviation statistic</i>	<i>Variance statistic</i>
CPUT	6	17.00	83.00	100.00	583.00	97.1667	2.83333	6.94022	48.167
NMMU	6	100.00	.00	100.00	471.00	78.5000	16.39868	40.16840	1613.500
WSU	5	.00	100.00	100.00	500.00	100.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
UCT	6	33.40	66.60	100.00	552.60	92.1000	5.58898	13.69014	187.420
UWC	5	100.00	.00	100.00	366.00	73.2000	19.44839	43.48793	1891.200
Stellenbosch	5	20.00	80.00	100.00	480.00	96.0000	4.00000	8.94427	80.000
UFH	6	20.00	80.00	100.00	580.00	96.6667	3.33333	8.16497	66.667
UP	6	100.00	.00	100.00	427.00	71.1667	16.37155	40.10195	1608.167
UFS	6	100.00	.00	100.00	433.30	72.2167	18.08997	44.31119	1963.482
UL	5	25.00	75.00	100.00	475.00	95.0000	5.00000	11.18034	125.000
NWU	6	100.00	.00	100.00	477.00	79.5000	16.33758	40.01875	1601.500
Rhodes	6	17.00	83.00	100.00	583.00	97.1667	2.83333	6.94022	48.167
WITS	6	100.00	.00	100.00	441.00	73.5000	15.88238	38.90373	1513.500
UJ	6	100.00	.00	100.00	405.00	67.5000	16.52019	40.46604	1637.500
UNIVEN	6	100.00	.00	100.00	475.00	79.1667	16.35118	40.05205	1604.167
UNIZUL	6	100.00	.00	100.00	475.00	79.1667	16.35118	40.05205	1604.167
UNISA	6	50.00	50.00	100.00	460.00	76.6667	10.54093	25.81989	666.667
DUT	6	100.00	.00	100.00	438.00	73.0000	16.60321	40.66940	1654.000
MUT	6	34.00	66.00	100.00	566.00	94.3333	5.66667	13.88044	192.667
TUT	6	100.00	.00	100.00	419.30	69.8833	17.51457	42.90177	1840.562
VUT	6	100.00	.00	100.00	475.00	79.1667	16.35118	40.05205	1604.167
CUT	6	100.00	.00	100.00	475.00	79.1667	16.35118	40.05205	1604.167
UKZN	5	100.00	.00	100.00	375.00	75.0000	19.36492	43.30127	1875.000
Valid N (listwise)	4								

Both WITS and UJ, situated in the Gauteng Province showed the highest representation of gender equity implementation in HE leadership.

Comparing Executive versus Faculty Gender Equity

Table 3 also presents trends in Executive and Faculty gender equity to determine whether the previously identified trends were mostly attributed to Executive or Faculty management positions.

As previously stated, it indicates that UJ and WITS were amongst institutions that showed the greatest representation of gender equity whilst UFH and WSU were amongst institutions that showed the least representation. It is furthermore noticeable that there was no significant difference between Executive and Faculty management as far as gender distribution was concerned, although the executive in all instances showed a marginally higher male orientation.

In cases of two of the most – male orientated universities, WSU and UFH, it can be seen that there is no doubt about the fact that these positions are occupied by either only or mostly male individuals. The exception, which is a deviation from 100 per cent male orientated, occurred with UFH that had one out of five deans appointed as female.

As for two of the most gender representative universities, UJ and WITS, the highest female scores in both cases occurred due to the fact that these universities have female registrars and showed a greater orientation towards female managers at faculty level.

DISCUSSION

Twenty years into democracy, and despite the WEGEB, amongst other policies and support structures as set up by USAID and HESA, the current scenario indicates that there are at this moment in time four female out of twenty-three VCs at South African HEIs. This constitutes 17 per cent of the current number of VCs in post-merged HEIs. This inequality is also reflected in the study of Shambare (2011), and the perceptions of South African women in the VotingAid statistics of 2014. What is the underlying message? Are women in South Africa still not equipped to head HEIs? Are they unwilling to do so, or is there a lack of capacity, amongst

other factors? The literature review speaks to underlying factors, including cultural and structural conditions that inhibit the advancement of women in HE leadership. The successful separation of public and private life has been identified as a favoured characteristic of good leadership. It would seem that men are more successful at this separation. This assertion, as other generalist assertions on what constitutes leadership, has to be confronted. As the literature review reflects, assertions become commonly accepted, simply because they are never challenged. Despite legislation and structures promoting GE, the research findings seem to suggest that GE may never materialise, and possibly never will we find a situation where the number of female VCs may outnumber the number of males, this, despite population statistics that indicate that women form the majority. Numbers in itself is not the goal. The goal is to provide positive role models for both men and women that reflect that women do have the capacity for decision-making and leadership, and to break the glass-ceiling. The recognition of women in HE leadership speaks volumes in a world where the validation of the girl-child and women as equal members of society, is still sorely lacking; and to break through the patriarchal and masculine-based characteristics as the only ones of value for positive and good leadership.

CONCLUSION

In this section it was firstly noted that from the descriptive data, WITS and UJ were amongst institutions that showed the greatest representation of gender equity whilst WSU and UFH were amongst institutions that showed mostly males occupying senior positions. This was derived from examining the mean scores of the various institutions, followed by similar and confirming patterns with regards to the indicators of spread, variance and standard deviation.

Secondly it was revealed that there was no significant difference between faculty and executive management positions with regards to gender distribution. This was further highlighted by the examination of individual institutions, which showed that in the most gender represented universities (UJ and WITS) that both faculty management and the position of registrar contributed mostly to their relative positions. Whilst these two universities fared the best in

relation to this analysis, it should not be forgotten that no single university in South Africa revealed a 50/50 split in gender equity distribution amongst management positions.

It is further interesting to note that both the most gender-representative universities, UJ and WITS are based in the Gauteng Province, a metropolitan-based Province, which is rich in diversity of population as well as richly resourced in terms of human capital as well as financial capacity. Rhodes, WSU and UFH (of the least gender-representative universities) are situated in the Eastern Cape, with UFH and WSU in particular, situated in the poorest areas of the Province, namely the former Ciskei and Transkei. This might be an indication that a possible correlation exists between diversity and richly resourced universities and gender distribution in higher management positions at HEIs. It should however be remembered that the number of variables that could have contributed to these representations are numerous, and generalisations surrounding these two variables would be dangerous. Overall the data indicates that the 50 percent equity target as set in the WEGEB as well as by the former-president Mbeki (2004) is not currently reflected in HE leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Should women engage with and play the rules of the game, as argued in the literature review? Or should the cultural and social constructs within organisations be critically examined and re-constituted on the basis of social justice? These cultural and social constructs go deeper than the educational setting. The outcomes of research conducted for this paper, identifies a possible link between the environmental settings, and the structure and culture of the institution, as highlighted by the reference to the influences of society's gendered cultures. This is reflected especially by the settings of institutions within the Eastern Cape. As previously stated, the Eastern Cape has a very large rural setting in the Eastern Part of the Province where the former Homelands of the Transkei and Ciskei are found. These are areas which have patriarchal systems which may spill over into the universities' cultural and structural organisation (WSU and UFH in particular). Universities (UJ and WITS) in the largely metropolitan Gauteng Province, with a

more diverse, cosmopolitan culture, may also be influenced by the surrounding diversity in culture and structure.

The researcher's view is that social justice forms the democratic basis of our society, and rather than playing a game that may be competitive, entrenched gendered roles and views should be studied and deconstructed. Where else but in the University setting, is discourse especially encouraged and social injustices academically challenged? Or does it simply remain an academic exercise? Policies are in place, and can and should be implemented. The voices of women and men who promote equity needs to be stronger within HEIs, critically examining gender views and the influence of cultural and structural constructs that place emphasis on patriarchal practices and norms. A re-invigorated and re-textured vocabulary with an expanded lexicon on leadership values should form part of the discourse. The success stories of women accessing authority and facilitating feminist change should also be explored. The irony is that universities are the grounds of knowledge production, and are change agents challenging the norms entrenched in society. Should we fail to redress GE in our own universities, how then do we instil a culture of equity and social justice within the students we claim to be preparing for a just society? We would simply be perpetuating the status quo. Yet it would seem that despite all these efforts and motivation for women to be capacitated and empowered, twenty years into democracy HE has not yet mobilised the efforts into reality.

LIMITATIONS

The research was limited to a desktop review of post-merged South African HEIs, namely universities. The research did not explore the individual environmental, social and cultural context of each institution, to explore particular factors which may impact on gender equity or inequity. It is acknowledged that a quantitative study based on a desktop review, may reflect the status quo, without providing an in-depth appreciation of an institution's unique circumstances. However, the significance of the study is that in general, the South African HEI context still reflects a global trend of gender inequity in HEIs, and makes the statement that as HEIs there is still a real and urgent

need to reflect on current ideologies and practices within our institutions.

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