

Promoting a Gender Responsive Organizational Culture to Enhance Female Leadership: A Case of Two State Universities in Zimbabwe

B. B. Chitsamatanga¹, S. Rembe² and J. Shumba³

Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, South Africa
E-mail: ¹<chitsamatangabellitabanda@yahoo.com, 201104691@ufh.ac.za>, ²<Srembe@ufh.ac.za>, ³<Jshumba@ufh.ac.za>

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ABSTRACT Though increasing attention has been paid to the issue of marked pyramid effect, whereby the bulk of female academics are at the lower rungs of the university leadership, there is a dearth of research on how universities can implement a gender responsive organizational culture to promote female leadership. With insights from two universities in Zimbabwe, this study, therefore, focused on how a gender responsive organizational culture could be promoted to enhance female leadership. A case study design was employed and the views of 10 university employees in leadership positions, comprising Pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Faculty Deans, Directors of Gender Schools and Senior Administrative Registrars were sought using semi-structured interviews. The study also used document analysis. The results of the study indicated that universities were promoting transformational leadership in a bid to promote the gender agenda. Male hegemony and lack of gender knowledge were identified as playing key roles in hindering the acknowledgement of females in positions of leadership. The researchers recommend gender awareness programs and adequate financial and human resources as prerequisites for promoting gender responsive universities and enhancement of female leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Gender imbalance in leadership positions has been a significant issue in universities for a long time (Redmond et al. 2017). As a result, a call has been made that universities should strive to create an organizational culture that fosters diversity and utilizes the expertise and capabilities of male and female academics (Peterson 2014; Wright et al. 2018). According to Zayad and Alzubi (2018), an organizational culture comprises shared beliefs, values and assumptions of members in an organization. These aspects ascertain not only the norms, but also the developing and patterning behaviors that emerge from the norms. In a similar way, Tseng (2010) and Needle (2004) define Organizational Culture (OC) as vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, beliefs and habits that dictate behaviors and attitudes of employees. Though an orga-

nizational culture is meant to be the oil that lubricates the wheels of an organization, it can, at the same time, put people at a disadvantage, especially if they are not part of the majority. Kadhem and Khalili (2013) posit that a conducive organizational culture is vital in the enhancement of the use of skills and abilities from both genders in universities. This means that the organizational culture in universities should be developed in such a way that recognition and appreciation of both genders within the leadership realm is promoted. Therefore, it is vital to create a gender sensitive university so that leadership and management structures in place can promote a fair representation of both genders in positions of leadership.

Literature Review

A fair representation of both genders in positions of leadership in universities is still a pipeline dream (Seshamani and Shalumba 2011; Dube and Dziva 2014). Universities have been described as male bloated, with chronic and gross gender bias that has failed to burst. This is a

Address for correspondence:
Bellita Banda Chitsamatanga
Faculty of Education,
University of Fort Hare, South Africa
Phone: 0027 83 7557084
E-mail: chitsamatangabellitabanda@yahoo.com

clear indication that opportunities to promote female leadership within universities need immediate redress through an organizational culture that is transparent, specific and well integrated (International Labor Organisation 2009). It is apparent that the orientation and strength of a university culture can be an inhibition or a facilitation of the techniques employed to enhance the visibility of females in decision-making processes. Therefore, some scholars (Khonja 2009; Desselle et al. 2017), argue that a gender responsive organizational culture is important, as it gives both male and female academics the opportunity to rethink universities as work places capable of bridging the patriarchal gap, breaking of the glass ceiling and promoting the gender agenda in the 21st century university.

The experience of female academics and the strength of the underlying university policies and organizational cultures are the principal dynamics that can influence their visibility to leadership positions. However, it would appear as if some universities have accepted challenges encountered by females to attain positions of leadership. There is a divergence of opinions on chilly climates, gender schemes, isolation, negative and unprofessional treatment, scanty opportunities to work collectively, barriers to research publication, too much workload and exclusion from professional activities. These factors are a threat to academic excellence and a waste of intellectual resources, which account for lack of a favorable organizational culture that supports female leadership in universities (Gaidzanwa 2007; Morley 2014; Wolf-Wendel and Ward 2015; Zvobgo 2015).

Ibarra et al. (2010), in their study on why men get more promotions than women, found that the rigid organizational culture buttresses the existing status quo in universities. There appears to be a lack of alternative ways to address gender inequality besides focusing on numerical parity as the sole proxy for gender equality in universities (Loots and Walker 2015). Moreover, formal protocols are dodged by those holding positions of power in universities, who regard females as risky appointments to leadership positions. This calls for a holistic way of implementing gender equality policies and promoting a gender responsive organizational culture that should be based on the expansion of opportunities and capacity for human development regardless of gender.

Igwe and Ilechukwe (2013), in a study in Nigeria, posit that since universities are the highest institutions of learning, they should be in a position to promote equitable participation of both genders. On the contrary, an earlier study by Shackleton et al. (2006) indicates that though academia is a dichotomous environment and an incubator for new ideals and ideas, surprisingly, the organizational culture in universities illuminates these institutions as conservative and patriarchal. Simply put, universities are inaudible on what constitutes an organizational culture that embraces female leadership. Another study by Evans (2014) in Zambia advances that female academics continue to be confined to less invisible and voiceless positions. Undeniably this male-dominated profession thwarts any headway to positions of leadership for females (Edmunds et al. 2016; Chapple and Ziebland 2018).

Kloot (2004) studied women and leadership in universities through a case study of one university comprising 3 female and 1 male academics. It emerged that gender issues continue to trouble women even after they attain top positions. The research findings of this study called for a more transparent and holistic organizational culture that is gender responsive. In the same vein, Lahti (2013) used a sample of 4 females to study Vietnamese women and leadership and the factors that influence women career success. The study found that negative organizational cultural factors continue to affect female academics and leadership opportunities. Therefore, the question worth asking at this point is: *What steps should universities employ to ensure that their organizational culture is gender responsive and is deemed fit for the 21st century university that supports enhancement of females in top positions?*

Gaidzanwa (2007), contextualizing the Zimbabwean situation, is quick to say that instead of promoting gender equality policies through pockets of good practice, the culture in African universities is best known for perpetuating the fundamental ills of gender inequality, which are yet to be challenged and changed. Zvobgo (2015) also alludes to the fact that the main barriers to female leadership are negative organizational cultures that are not gender responsive and calls out for female academics to take an active role in addressing their disadvantageous positions. In light of this, De la Rey (2017) pos-

its that there is need for a paradigm shift in organizational practices and processes that require rigorous attention and should be complemented by societal shifts in gender-related expectations. In addition, universities can identify many of the unsaid rules and informal practices that inhibit women moving into leadership roles and then resolve to change them.

A study done in Italy by Turesky et al. (2011) on 14 female leaders' highlights that changes in university cultures to enhance female leadership required the policymakers to alter their own traditional beliefs to avoid reproducing normative inequalities. On the other hand, Guramatunhu-Mudiwa (2015) postulates that a regression in female leadership is because research authorities have been inaudible on how organizational culture influences female leadership within the academia. Yet, a gender responsive organizational culture in any university is a very strong variable that can be used to promote gender parity in positions of leadership (Zayad and Aluzubi 2018). A convergence of literature (Mabokele 2002; White 2003; Nguyen 2012; McNae and Vali 2015; Moody 2015; Edmunds et al. 2016; De la Rey 2017; Chapple and Ziebland 2018) alludes to the fact that the situation can only change if universities are not seen as small-scale versions of male domination that give little or no attention to gender issues.

Mugweni (2014) also did a study comprising 30 male and 30 female academics in four universities in Zimbabwe. The focus was female lecturers' promotion to management positions. The findings of the study highlighted that top management in Zimbabwean universities still reflects the long established mythology and ideologies that empower male academics over females. Mugweni (2014) further states that gender equality policies that are meant to empower females and promote a gender responsive organizational culture in the universities have continually remained political. This goes without saying that the political will of leadership in universities must be seen as a major driving force of change that supports visibility of females in decision making processes.

A study by Osibanjo and Adenji (2012) in Nigerian private universities, which used a sample size of 237 participants through stratified random sampling, found that to achieve and sustain growth of females in positions of leadership, a supportive and gender responsive orga-

nizational culture was considered a motivational instrument. Further, Jackson (2011) posits that the organizational culture within universities is becoming increasingly important because its role is to support cross collaboration between leadership and its employees, which requires greater involvement of all participants at all levels. Another key contribution is made by Mwando et al. (2014), who submit that university cultures and female leadership ascension can only be challenged if universities are tackled structurally and comprehensively. They further state that this can be achieved by observing the policies of gender equality, which advocate that males and females have to be at par in all human endeavors so that male domination can be dismantled. However, due to the existing organizational cultures in universities, the roots of gender inequality are still deeply seated. The contemporary situation infers and is still characterized by one language—inequality.

Main Research Question

How can a gender responsive organizational culture be promoted to enhance female leadership?

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify leadership styles that promote a gender responsive organizational culture and enhance female leadership in universities.
2. To establish strategies used in enhancing a gender responsive organizational culture that promotes female leadership in universities.
3. To find organizational related barriers that hinder promotion of a gender responsive organizational culture and promotion of female leadership in universities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The interpretive paradigm was adopted for this study and a qualitative approach was used because it remains most popular in building gendered understandings of how people in professional, familial relationships strategize to integrate different aspects of their lives within an organizational setting (Creswell 2015; Petty 2017). The case study design was adopted for the study

and the primary data was solicited from 10 participants using semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The participants in this study included Pro-Vice Chancellors (PVCs), Registrars, Faculty Deans (FDs), Directors of Gender Schools (DGS) and Senior Administrative Registrars (SARs) from two state universities in Zimbabwe. The participants were purposively selected because they were viewed as principal sources of evidence and were perceived to be in a position to provide relevant data on how a gender responsive organizational culture can enhance female leadership.

RESULTS

Transformational Leadership as a Tool for Promoting Female Leadership in Universities

A conducive university organizational culture is one strategy identified as ideal for promoting gender equality and empowering female leadership as well as promoting excellent leadership skills in universities. The participants were asked to state how they viewed the leadership in their university and its existing organizational culture in relation to promotion of gender equality and female leadership. The following extracts are examples of the participants' responses. DRHR1 explained:

Our organizational culture identifies potential amongst all staff members. Even some of the employees who had their "little cultures" that they wanted to proliferate within the institution have had to let go. Remember, we are a multi-campus university that on its own is a tall order for the management to ensure that our values, vision and mission in relation to a conducive and gender responsive organizational culture and gender equality remain the same.

DRHR2 gave the following response:

Our leadership is very gender sensitive and transformational. This is because our vision and mission speak to our organizational culture, which is to promote oneness in both genders.

DGS' response indicates that the management was the key driver in promoting a conducive environment for growth of both genders in the university. DGS explained:

We are a growing university and the fact that the leadership is transformational and supports diversity, thus promoting an organiza-

tional culture that is conducive for both genders to realize their growth and potential in all positions, shows that our leadership style is transformational and supports diversity.

FD1 explained:

It is important that we have the same values and beliefs in an institution to avoid conflict of interest. You will find that our leadership and organizational culture are linked with our university's niche area, which is a culture of art and heritage. So, we promote, through our leadership, the university organizational culture in line with our country's heritage and culture.

FD2 observed:

When we started this university, the ratio of males-females was 70-30 and even at the chairperson's level it was mostly males and at the deanship level we only had one female. Before, the organizational culture did not favor females in top positions. However, now we see more females holding leadership positions and this shows that the current organizational culture is conducive for both genders to work together.

PVC1 cited that as a way of moving away from patriarchy, fragmentation and male dominated leadership, the university had an open door policy that gave academics the opportunity to nominate their own departmental chairpersons.

We do have an open door policy here, as our leadership is transformational. Academics are free to have a one-on-one with the Vice Chancellor. For instance, when a Departmental Chairperson's term expires, academics come here and we do a one-on-one interview with them and we ask who they think is capable to be their Chairperson so as to create fair representation in leadership positions. On rare occasions we have females recommending each other. We even identify those females that we think can be good leaders and talk to them to make them available for top posts.

PVC2 explained:

In terms of leadership, this university is the only one that has mainstreamed the teaching of gender for all its population. This shows that gender equality plays an important role in our university culture.

The participants highlighted that the organizational culture was no longer rigid or patriarchal but inclusive of both genders and this inspired the university community to express their expectations. Further, the organizational culture

gave room for addressing of the dearth of female leadership in universities. Moreover, management's identification of females who can lead, tapping and exchanging information from both genders and inclusion of conducive organizational culture within the vision and mission statements was evidence of transformational leadership in both universities. The above extracts indicate that there are some pockets of good practices with regard to enhancing female leadership because there is transparency in selecting candidates to positions of departmental chairpersons. Therefore, the autonomy and the freedom that is exercised in these universities promote gender responsive organizational cultures, which enhance gender equality and female leadership.

Organizational Culture as a Principal Factor in Promoting Female Leadership

The study also sought to find if organizational culture was a principal factor in enhancement of females into leadership positions. The findings of the study illuminate that the existing organizational culture was a critical variable in promoting female leadership in universities. Below are different perspectives from the participants. PVC1 opined:

In the long run yes, that is if we continue to take issues of gender equality to higher levels and creating equal opportunities for everyone. If this is added on to the gender equality policies that we have and we ensure that they are implemented, monitored and evaluated, and all levels are involved, then females will also feel safe to take up these positions without feeling intimidated by their male counterparts.

PVC2's sentiments were not far from his counterpart. The PVC said:

Well, universities are run on merit and so the meritocracy principle will apply but in its application where there are two candidates who equally qualify and one is female, the opportunity should go to the female candidate. This is a realization that unless we do that, inequalities that exist will be there for a long time. Even among the PhD holders, there are more males than females despite the fact that we are developing both genders in this university to get their PhDs so that policy will tap on the best breed and brand of academics from both genders.

DRHR2 alluded to the following:

At one time we changed the appointment procedure and we appointed females only to create that critical mass. If a male had to be employed that had to be accompanied by justification to say the department had failed to identify a female to take up that position because during that time the ratio of male to female was skewed and this did not show a good gender equality picture in our university.

FD2 made important comments worth noting and stated that while promoting a gender sensitive organizational culture, it was critical that these leadership positions be given to deserving candidates.

If we are not careful in implementing gender equality we might end up putting women at a disadvantage unknowingly when recruiting them. We have to make sure that we are not pushing people to certain positions even if they don't deserve them or qualify simply because we want gender equality, because if one is promoted to leadership, speculation is always high on how it happened.

SAR2 used the example of student leadership as a way to show that the gender equality policy and the existing culture in their university had cascaded to the student level and could promote female leadership. She noted:

Yes, I think this is possible because when you look at the students themselves you will see that for the first time ever we have an SRC female president. The momentum of gender issues must not be lost and this boils down to the way that our leaders embrace and create an organizational culture that the employees will either adopt or reject.

A key finding from the above sentiments was that the majority of the participants from both universities under study were convinced that the existing organizational culture could enhance the ascendancy of females to leadership positions.

In support DRHR2 stated that,
We have tried to come up with programs to elevate women as a way of supporting them. We have put in place a program called Female Leadership and Management Excellence (FLAME) where we try every year to send a minimum of 10 females to leadership courses so that they can be groomed. We want females to be leaders and to remove that mentality that leadership is meant for males.

The participants' responses show that gender equality is promoted through recruitment processes and enhancement of attainment of higher academic qualifications. Therefore, universities should put in place set targets that are transparent on how gender equality and critical mass of females in top positions will be achieved. From the participants' responses, there has been mention of pockets of good practices in effecting gender equality and female leadership. It has been pointed out that there is a leadership course meant for females on leadership skills and Staff Development Programs to attain higher degrees.

Educating the University Leadership and Employees on Gender Equality Issues

The participants were requested to shed light about the steps that their respective universities had taken to educate them on the importance of promoting a gender responsive organizational culture, recognition of females in leadership positions and endorsing gender equality. Though all participants were in agreement that there had been gender awareness workshops and seminars, what was different from both universities was the level of education provided by their universities. Below are their responses. For instance, DGS1 brought the conversation to a higher level when she made mention of one of the issues that usually get minimum attention in universities. The participant highlighted that universities had to be mindful and should educate their employees on sexual harassment because it is aligned with issues of promoting a gender responsive organizational culture and female experiences to top positions. The DGS explained:

We have committed ourselves to holding workshops and sensitizing people on the issues of gender and we have taken the lead in coming up and inviting different stakeholders, especially females, to provide some empowerment programs including in relation sexual harassment and what it is. We are actually working on a sexual harassment policy so that while females get the chance of climbing the ladder through promotion of gender policies, they may do so in a free and safe environment and are not harassed in the process.

In support of the above, the DRHR1 also stated:

There have been workshops that have been held and even seminars where the university invites local, national, regional and international speakers to sensitize and educate us on

gender equality and how females should not be left out in the equation. I believe they will act in a positive impact on why promoting a gender responsive culture is important and why qualifying females should be included in the decision-making processes.

In addition, SAR1 felt that the university and the gender school were great team partners in educating them about gender issues:

We have held public lectures for the benefit of both the university and the community. We were taught how to tackle issues of sexual harassment and gender based violence at institutional level and in our surrounding communities.

PVC2 submitted:

Well, in council meetings it was talked about, in senate it is talked about. There is no real course or seminar offered to teach people in key committees but we talk about it. Quality assurance is one of the key variables that we look at to measure success, but there are very few females coming through.

Evidence from the data shows that gender awareness programs to promote female leadership through a gender responsive organizational culture is offered in a variety of ways. The awareness activities are offered through workshops, public seminars, sensitization in top management committees and community involvement. In addition, data indicates that NGOs and regional and international gender experts were also invited to educate the universities and the surrounding communities. Such initiatives may be viewed as pockets of good practices that both universities are implementing as a way of driving issues relating to the gender agenda to higher levels. Moreover, it may be concluded that the inclusion of the surrounding community shows that the universities are promoting community engagement. However, the major drawback at both universities was limited gender awareness programs, which was due to lack of adequate human and financial resources. Therefore, lack of a gender responsive organizational culture on its own might not efficiently and sufficiently address the problem on the ground because the masculinity culture continues to be hegemonic, leading to females being continuously marginalized.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that some of the participants felt that the leadership style in their universities had changed from being rigid and

patriarchal to being transformational. Thus, an open door policy was being promoted. The current findings are in line with a study conducted by Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi (2016), showing that transformational leadership has been found to have an important influence on innovation, and promotion of organizational change, which leads to a spirit of trust and the willingness to help employees exceed in their performance expectations. Hamdi (2015) and Guillaume and Austin (2016) indicate that it is essential to realize that transformational leadership encourages employees to do more than they originally thought possible. Moreover, this leadership style contributes to organizational learning and encourages university communities to participate in educational programs and develop the skills needed to promote the gender agenda. Transformational leadership increased commitment in both universities to create a clear vision for the future of their universities, with the aim of overcoming crisis of, and encouraging the generation of, new ideas to promote female leadership through gender responsive organizational culture.

However, it emerged that some participants felt that a gender responsive organizational culture was non-existent because the leadership in their university was still rigid and top positions were still dominated by males. The findings of the current study align with research by U'Mofe-Gordon (2016) who argues that while African universities are imperative in national development, there is lack of transformational leadership and good governance in these universities, which leads to ineffective implementation of the gender agenda. Zulfqar et al. (2016) also state that female leadership in universities can only be enhanced if universities consist of an organizational culture that promotes gender equality and inclusion of both genders on crucial matters and in decision-making processes.

However, do Mar Pereira (2016), Eboiyehi et al. (2016) and Howe-Walsh and Turnbull (2016) refute the above findings. These researchers highlight that the blame for the dearth in female leadership in critical positions should not be placed entirely on the existing organizational culture and leadership style. The extant literature illuminates that female academics lack aspiration and confidence, are afraid of applying for top positions and isolate themselves from those

females that fight for gender parity (De la Rey 2017; Kholis 2017). This fuels existing gender disparities and the lack of unified voices by both genders in universities. These views are supported by Black and Islam (2014) and Shepherd (2017) who found that as long as females did not put themselves forward for recognition within their institutions and unless they show resilience and take risks, then they will continue to be questioned regarding their career trajectories in universities. Redmond et al. (2016) give answers to these accusations and posit that for those females who aspire to be leaders, they should commit themselves to ongoing development, embrace opportunities presented to them, develop resilience and gun for support. This means female academics have to be more vigilant, learn new skills and constantly upgrade their knowledge and qualifications if they are to be able to lead universities.

The findings of the study indicate that some university leaders and employees in both universities may lack the necessary skills to effectively deal with issues and challenges that reside in their organizational culture in connection with gender equality and advancement of females into leadership positions. This is supported by Kabeer (2016) and Vial et al. (2016) who state that many university leaders and their employees are ignorant of the gender equality initiatives leading to resistance, cooperation, appreciation and acceptance when it comes to enhancement of female leadership.

The participants also revealed that the implementation of the gender policy, gender structure and a gender sensitive organizational culture had promoted a positive outlook towards the inclusion of females in positions of leadership. These findings are congruent with studies by Moorosi (2010), and Read and Kehm (2016). These scholars are of the view that though numerous challenges still exist in universities concerning critical mass of females in top positions, if adequately addressed and supported through a favorable organizational culture, this may pave way for females to positions of leadership.

It was further established that some participants felt that the existing organizational culture in their universities could not close the gender gap or promote female leadership, citing that too much attention was being given to females, and thus promoting micro politics to maintain

the status quo. However, Krawiec (2016) argues that the gender gap is likely to be closed and female leadership enhanced because there are a number of strategies and transformations that allow female ascendancy to the high strata. The findings also corroborate with the results of a study carried out by Kubuabola et al. (2016) where it emerged that females have contributed largely in the form of policy development and good progress in recruitment and retention, economic and environmental development.

On the other hand, while advocating for female visibility in positions of leadership through the implementation of gender equality policy, it was revealed by one of the PVCs that meritocracy should apply so that universities can tap on the best breed and brand from both genders in recruitment and promotions. Accordingly, Crimmins (2018) and Lent et al. (1994) raise very critical points by pointing out that there have always been misgivings about applying non-meritocratic aspects in relation to career mobility in academia. In the same line of thought, Cret and Musselin (2012) state that academic excellence is the only path to nomination and promotion to leadership positions in universities regardless of gender. Thus, these authorities, though writing from different contexts, speak with one voice that meritocracy should not be ignored when it comes to upholding quality assurance in learning institutions. However, lack of assertiveness by females in academia propagates the myth of meritocracy in universities.

Corroy and Savignac (2016) and O'Sullivan (2016) are not in support of the above views and the findings of the study, as they hold that putting aside the issue of meritocracy, the problem is that positions of leadership are too descriptive in universities. Moreover, females are made objects of comparison before they are considered competent and worthy to lead by male counterparts. However, Eagly and Carli (2007) and Ford (2016) submit that the opportunities for female academics in universities nowadays are abundant and what is required is for them to be more proactive because the concept of impenetrability no longer exists in universities. However, it should be noted that the same authors mention that those female academics who are ambitious to lead in universities are often punished and deemed incompatible, too bossy and power hungry (De la Rey 2017).

The CODs from both universities said though positive changes had been realized, universities had to be explicit on how set targets towards female leadership would be met because the numbers were still extremely low. For instance, a study by Read and Kehm (2016) concurs with the above findings, as it shows that as of 2015, seventeen percent of female VCs were from UK universities, while twelve percent were from German universities, showing that critical mass of females in universities was yet to be realized. Olaogun et al. (2015) also support the findings of the study and state that in commonwealth universities only twenty-four percent is a representation of females who are full-time academic members and in African universities there are only twenty-nine percent of females and forty-one percent globally, with Zimbabwe having only nine percent of females in universities. Further, Guramatunhu-Mudiwa's (2010) study also showed that out of a total of 105 universities in the SADC region, 89.7 percent were male led and only 12 universities, which comprise 10.3 percent, were led by females. Recently, De la Rey (2017) highlighted that though the number of universities has increased from 23 to 26 since 2010, ironically, there are only three female Vice Chancellors as compared to four in 2010 in South African universities. The similarity of the findings of the study with other studies as indicated above is evidence that the problem of lack of female leadership is a global phenomenon. Read and Kehm (2016) further assert that in order to increase the critical mass and reach the set target then pockets of good practice, as observed from German universities where a steering committee was put in place and was used to promote females by ensuring that all open positions were given to females, should be copied.

According to Gberville et al. (2014), availability of quality management in relation to the skills, education and experience that avoid gender insensitivity and discrimination points to a gender sensitive organizational culture. Ogbogu (2012) add that competent employees, be it male or female, are required in universities because these are institutions that are open minded to support social movements that promote the principles of democracy and social justice. The above findings are in line with the findings of the current study where a number of gender-related and training workshops had been car-

ried out through the facilitation of local, regional and international speakers. These had focused on sexual harassment, gender based violence and gender equality. Similarly, Nguyen (2016) advances that training and development in universities should be considered a basic requirement for building a university that is gender aware. Moreover, universities should be proactive in providing and supporting its academics with workshops and training throughout their careers.

The results of the study illuminated that the gender trainings and awareness programs in place were inadequate because most of these workshops were one-day workshops that were afforded by management and the university community. As such, the participants highlighted that more needed to be done from top to the lower rungs of the university concerning gender training. Maurtin-Cairncross (2015) supports the above and states that there are limited opportunities for training in universities, and yet literature continues to highlight how adequate support on gender equality matters is critical (Roehling and Huang 2018). Instead, universities should use every opportunity and means to educate the university community on promotion of gender equality (Zvobgo 2015; Newman et al. 2016). The findings are also supported by Hamdi (2015: 301), who says that in-service training is vital and may yield benefits such as directly impacting the bottom line and increasing performance, and positively affect leadership growth and organizational performance, which leads to leadership effectiveness. In addition, such training is capable of promoting self-awareness and improving problem solving skills among university employees (Hamdi 2015). However, (Zvogbo 2013) advances that there may be adequate support and commitment but due to resources involved in gender training and workshops, some universities may find it hard to take advantage of gender training to address the dearth of female leadership.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that the transformational leadership style adopted by universities has huge rewards for gender equality. Findings revealed that an open door policy where employees had direct interaction with the universi-

ty leadership was being promoted as a way of prompting transparency and gender equality regardless of an employee position. Moreover, some leadership positions such as those of chairpersons were left in the hands of the academics to vote for individuals they saw fit to lead them. However, this paper concludes that male hegemony is still rife within the university environment and this is causing lack of acceptance of females in positions of leadership and is promoting persistence of lack of gender knowledge. This is an indication that transformational leadership and commitment to promoting gender equality and a gender responsive organizational culture is yet to be deeply engrained in some university structures. Promotion of transparency in all gender programs and initiatives has led to growth of critical mass of females in decision-making processes. However, there is still too much micro-politics promoting the existing status quo and undermining female capabilities. Furthermore, it can be deduced from the findings that the inclusion of females in positions of leadership means that universities have to be explicit about how the critical mass of females would be attained because the current statistics spell otherwise. In terms of educating the university community about gender equality and promoting females to position of leadership, meaningful gender related programs, training and workshops have been carried out to change the existing terrain and create a gender equal organizational culture. The collaborations are done with the NGOs, external gender experts and activists and different speakers. However, limited time frames and lack of adequate human and financial resources are hindering effective gender training for the university community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adequate human and financial resources are prerequisites for enhancement of female leadership and promotion of a gender responsive organizational culture. There is need to implement affirmative action so as to promote critical mass of females in top positions. Universities should also tap into pockets of good practices from other universities internationally, regionally and locally on how to promote the gender agenda in their institutions.

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