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Mainstreaming Gender at Polytechnics in Ghana: Opportunity for Development

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Abstract

Gender Mainstreaming is imperative in contemporary development planning. It is globally accepted strategy forpromoting gender equality especially in institutions of higher education. Polytechnics are crucial centres for change and gender mainstreaming their curriculum, enrolments, and general operation is also crucial as it will enable them to fulfill thismandate. Enhancing quality education by women and men, and removing gender stereotyping in the curriculum, careerchoices and the professions is the panacea for sustainable development. In this respect, obstacles to women'sparticipation in higher education need to be minimized or eradicated completely. Therefore, recruitment, enrolments,promotions and organizational structures need to be gender mainstreamed. This research involved extensive documentaryreviews. Interviews with key selected stakeholders, representative of students, academic and administrative staff and topdecisionmakers and implementers were also contacted. The paper suggests that the application of a gender mainstreamingstrategy is possible, though complex. The case study institution analyzed shows some progress but there are still manychallenges relating to structural issues, sustainability, policy formulation, the commitment of actors involved, and the wholeaspect of attitudinal change both at individual level and collectively for the polytechnic .
Keywords: Gender, Gender Auditing, Gender Budgeting, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Planning.

1. Introduction

Gender disparities in various societal organizations have been a subject of ongoing research initiatives. Gendermainstreaming is imperative in contemporary development planning. Gender Mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategyfor promoting gender equality (March, Smith &Mukhopadhay, 1999). Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy or an approach, a means to achieve thegoal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of genderequality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, andplanning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects. Polytechnics are crucial centres for change in terms ofresearch and manpower development and gender mainstreaming their curriculum, enrolments, and general operation iscrucial as it will enable them to fulfil this mandate (Britum&Anokye 2006). Enhancing quality education by women and men, and removing gendersterotyping in the curriculum, career choices and the professions is the panaceafor sustainable development (March et al, 1999). In thisrespect, obstacles to women's participation in higher education need to be eradicated. Therefore, recruitment, enrolments,promotions and organizational structures need to be gender mainstreamed. The underlying argument of the paper is that thepolytechnic education sector in Ghana and more specifically at the Koforidua Polytechnic is not "sufficiently"gender mainstreamed. This is so in spite of the fact that in 2005, the Swedru communiqué adopted affirmative action policy for the establishment of gender desk in all universities in Ghana. However, as social institutions, polytechnics are not immune to the moral corruption of the society. It is imperative to highlight the issue of gender within the specific context of the complexities of polytechnics as higher education institutions where middle level personnel, future leaders and technocrats are trained as well as place where research is of particular value. Gender is the socially determined divisionof roles and responsibilities and power between men and women. These socially constructed roles are usually unequal interms of power and decision making. These inequalities are also manifest in control over assets and events, freedom ofaction and ownership of resources, among others (Ellis, 2000). Furthermore, gender roles and responsibilities are culturally specificand can change over time, sometimes being rapidly influenced by socio- economic and technological change. The Koforidua Polytechnic has itsown gender culture that is relationships between women and men, e.g.in whose hands are the most powerful positions, whohas access to more resources, and who has stronger networks which they can appropriate to their own ends.

2. Gender in Polytechnics

Polytechnic education is one of the most key institutions responsible for re-thinking and re-defining reality thus a key tochange. Gender is one of the changes that need to be addressed. Research and development are major sources ofknowledge, and polytechnics are responsible for creating new knowledge, new values and attitudes. Polytechnics play a criticalrole in mapping out feasible potential directions that Ghana can take, whilst taking into consideration the historicalcontext. The impact of gender disparities is a negation of the fundamental principles underpinning the existence ofpolytechnics. Portnoi (2003) asserts that, in order for higher learning institutions of which polytechnics form part, to be leaders and role models for democracy they must themselvespractice the politics of inclusion and forge democratic principles. Gender is one of the tenets of development thereforemainstreaming gender in polytechnics is fundamental to matters that require to be addressed urgently, as it goes beyond theeffecting of social justice and equity. Gender mainstreaming processes are contested; the contestation is evidenced by therluctance to discard sectional or special projects for women and to make space for them in everyday operations, positionsand situations where policies, priorities

and executive decisions are made. The gender debate in polytechnics cannot beisolated from the broader political, social, cultural and economic context. Locating the gender debate in polytechnics withinthis context helps to move towards a more systematic approach and broader understanding of the dynamics at play inhistorical space and time. In line with this view, it is important to locate this gender debate as embedded in the post independent Ghana whilst concurrently considering the influence of socio-economic andpolitical variables.A Polytechnic as a human institution is culturally defined, and reflects and replicates the values of those who set it up (in the case of Koforidua Polytechnic, theGovernment of Ghana). Every institution normally has four components; strategy,structure, systems and culture (AAU Report 2006) as explained below:

1. Strategy includes an organization's vision, mission, goals and how it intends to achieve them.

2. Structure refers to its divisions, allocation of tasks, and positions of authority and responsibilities, and the relationshipsbetween its members.

3. Systems constitute the rules, regulations, policies that govern the operations of the institution.

4. Culture is the shared values, opinions and norms of its members as determined by the conventions and unwritten rulesof the organization, its norms of cooperation and conflict, mores and its channels for exerting influence. Gendermainstreaming would imply engendering each of these organizational aspects and levels.

2.1 Trends in Polytechnic Leadership in Ghana

There are 10 Polytechnics in Ghana namely, Accra Polytechnic, Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ho Polytechnic, Tarkoradi Polytechnic, Sunyani Polytechnic, Kumasi Polytechnic, Tamale Polytechnic, Wa Polytechnic, Bolga Polytechnic and Koforidua Polytechnic. A random selection of Polytechnics in Ghana reveals the following trends in top management structures;

1. The Rectors of all the nation's 10 polytechnics, 9 are males and 1 female

2. The office ofvice Rectors of the 10 polytechnics are all headed by males

3.Out of the 10 polytechnics Sunyani and Tarkoradi Polytechnics have their Registrars as females the registry of the other 8 are headed by males

4. TheKoforidua Polytechnic which is the case under study have all the Deans of the 5 faculties as males.

Currently, in most of the polytechnics in Ghana, women are concentrated at the middle and lower end of the institutional hierarchy. As at 2015there are no women full professors but only one associate professor. This picture points to the poor ratio of women to menin management and operations of the polytechnics in Ghana and the same scenario is evident especially in applied science andtechnology where very few female students and female lecturers are represented. It becomes essential to ask questions; what could have contributed tothis scenario? Don't we have enough highly educated women who can assume leadership positions? Can polytechnicsbe justifiedin criticizing structures that perpetuate oppression when they are themselves promoting the same inequalities? Is genderequality less important than other forms of equality? How can polytechnics offer contemporary solutions through researchwhen their structures are not gender sensitive? Regardless of the existence of enabling well crafted policies gender disparitiespersist in most polytechnics in Ghana and beyond. The situation is a clear manifestation of the gap that exists betweenpolicy formulation and implementation. This scenario shows that many women are not entering postgraduate programmes at thesame rate that they enter undergraduate programmes in Ghana. For that reason it will be a canard to expect women tobe comparatively represented on polytechnic teaching, research programmes and management structures. From the statistics, the ratio ofwomen in management is very small compared to that of men.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The analysis of gender mainstreaming is premised through an analysis of the Moser (1989) Framework

2.2.1 Moser Framework

The Moser (1989) framework recognized the transformative potential of gender planning in development and practice. She therefore, developed a gender planning framework that distinguished between types of gender needs: the practical and the strategic. Rees (2000) reiterates that, the framework aims to set up gender planning in its own right. Gender planning aims toemancipate women from their subordination, leading to their achievement of equality, equity and empowerment. However,this varies with context, and is dependent on the degree to which women are subordinated in status to men (Moser, 1989). Theframework questions assumptions that gender planning is a purely technical task and views it as distinct from traditionalplanning methods. Instead, Moser (1989) views gender planning as both political and technical in nature, assumes conflict in planningprocess, involves transformative processes and characterizes planning as debate.The Moser Framework has 4 categoriesof analysis. These are the Triple Role Framework, Practical and Strategic gender needs, Disaggregation of control of resourcesand decision making within the household and distinguishing between Women in Development (WID)/Gender andDevelopment (GAD) policy approaches. The framework makes work visible and valuable through the concept of triple rolesand categorizes policy approaches (Moser, 1989). Furthermore, the framework moves beyond technical elements of planning to recognizesocio-economic and political dimensions in gender mainstreaming. The Moser framework assumes conflict of interest in theplanning process and recognizes the transformative potential of gender planning. The framework conceptualizes planning asaiming to challenge unequal gender relations and support women's empowerment (Moser, 1989). However, the idea of gender rolesobscures the notion of gender relationships and can give false impressions of natural order and equality. The MoserFramework however ignores factors such as class, race and ethnicity in its approach. Moreover, the framework is static; itdoes not examine change over time as a variable. Potentially, policy approaches which could seem to be mutually exclusivemay overlap in practice. The shift in focus from WID to GAD is clearly articulated in the feminist political ecology theory (Moser, 1989). Saunders, (2002) is of the view that, thistheory carries with it assumptions that gender differentiation can be traced to societal division of labour, property rights andpower relations, whether these are gendered, physical, racial, class-based, or cultural.

3. Materials and Methods

The qualitative research methodology formed the basis of this study, although a quantitative research design was alsoemployed. The two approaches are complementary, providing different perspectives and answering different specificquestions within any one broad area (Wiskers, 2008). In addition, qualitative research is inherently multi-method in design (Denzin& Lincoln, 2000; Flick, 1998))and this enabled use of triangulation to validate data gathered through extensive documentary reviews, interviews with keyselected stakeholders, representative of students, academic and administrative staff and top-decision makers andimplementers were also contacted. Consequently, (Wiskers, 2008) states that qualitative research may help to understand thefindings of quantitative research. In this way, the researcher endeavoured to offset the potential biases associated withquantitative research, mainly, such as being subject to researcher bias (Wiskers, 2008). Fundamental to this study is the use of a case study. Detailed empirical research is needed in a specific geographical context to understand the dynamics of gendermainstreaming. The approach is an efficient way of capturing context specific details. A case study is "an empirical enquirythat investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" and is particularly suitable for answering the 'how'and 'why' questions (Roulston, 2010) for instance; How does Gender Mainstreaming contribute to development? According to Flick (1998), a case study is alsodefined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context and relies on multiple sources ofdata.

4 Gender Mainstreaming in Koforidua Polytechnic and Existing Activities to Initiate and Strengthen It

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for men and women of any planned action, includinglegislation, policies or programmes in all areas at all levels (March et al (1999). It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns andexperiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmesin all economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is reduced. The rationale forgender mainstreaming and gender equality policy perspective at Koforidua Polytechnic is twofold; a human rights perspective to ensurethat women and men have equal access and control over recognizing the different interests, roles and responsibilities; andneeds of women and men in order to meet and support these, with the aim to achieve an effective and sustainabledevelopment (Koforidua Poly Strategic Plan 2014).Most stakeholders (80%) at the polytechnic seem aware of the need for gender equity and equality but reality on the groundproves otherwise. Women are grossly under-represented as students, lecturers and administrators. Less than forty per centof the polytechnic enrolment of about 6888 students is female as at September 2015. The Polytechnic does not have a clear-cutgender-mainstreaming policy. It has affirmative action policies; but these appear to be mere policy frameworks which do nothave significant bearing on gender, for example students are recruited on the strength of their qualifications rather thananything else. There are no gender equity policies with reference to staff recruitment, retention and promotion. Deliberate long-term efforts should be enacted to empower women in the academe.

Studies have shown that in the developing world, the lower education system still has a gender related bottleneck system. This is evident as women's representation shrinks as theeducation hierarchy proceeds, so much so that, by the time of entry into higher learning institutions like polytechnics and universities,women are grossly underrepresented especially in the sciences and technology. For instance, out of the 10 polytechnics in Ghana, only the KoforiduaPolytechnichas female Rector, this is inconsistent with the gender balance advocated for byboth the Ministries of Gender, that of Higher Education, girl child education and science and technological development. At the Koforidua Polytechnic less thanhalf the executive posts are occupied by women, for example of the five executive dean posts are all occupied by males. Of the eleven departments under the five Faculties of the polytechnic, 2 are headed by females; nine positions are occupied by males. This may imply that a fewwomen specialized in the sciences both at senior high school, polytechnic and university and hence the need for gender mainstreaming at alllevels of education at Koforidua polytechnic in particular and polytechnics in Ghana in general. There is therefore the need to bring in science bridging courses to caterfor both female and male students who fail to register for first time so that they prepare for science education at Polytechnic. In the same vein the Koforidua Polytechnic can expand its staff development programmes so that more lecturers with a Masters Degree areencouraged to pursue PhD Studies with financial assistance from the polytechnic. The institutionalization of gendermainstreaming policies and strategies has to be done at different levels in Koforidua Polytechnic that include the following:

Academic Bodies, Administrative Bodies, Faculties, Departments, Research and Development   Student Bodies,Classroom Facilities

4.1Gender Budgeting

Women's rights activists have over the years spentsignificant amounts of energy advocating for gender budgeting, as a model and tool that ensures effective and responsivepublic policies for women. It helps to analyze whether programmes actually reach and benefit the most disadvantaged intended beneficiaries who are often girls and women (ILO-TVET, 2012). March et al (1999) opine that, the overall goal of gender budgeting is to reduce gender inequalities and to promote gendersensitivedevelopment policies for poverty reduction and improvement of the welfare of women and men, boys and girls. This can be donethrough the central budget to achieve gender-sensitive budget that address the needs of all people equitably, while takinginto consideration the special needs of people with disabilities.Mainstreaming gender into the polytechnic curriculum and the establishment of the Gender Mainstreaming office within the polytechnic community will help towards the actualization of a fully gender mainstreamed polytechnic. Theorganizational culture which is male dominated can be changed over time and Gender budgeting need to be taken into serious considerationtowards the actualization of this venture. There is also the need to update current data to highlight importantgender disparities. The polytechnic system should take gender issues as an integral part of all its dialogue, discussions,programming and planning process in all quarterly and annual reviews. An ongoing process of dialogue and

consultation ongender issues integration should be established with all relevant stakeholders that include other Polytechnics in the countryand establish networks with international organizations.

4.2 Gender Auditing In Polytechnics

Gender auditing is a process to understand the situations of women relative to those of men in a given institution; areasof focus may include on the gender gaps in enrolment, retention and achievement by men and women (AAU Report, 2006). A gender auditwill enable polytechnics to decide and secure commitment of top management to change towards greater gender equality so asprovide gender training to human resources practitioners and staff. This done so that policies enacted are sensitive and fairto women and men's needs at work. In addition there is need to produce guidelineson gender-sensitive interviewing and assessment of applicants· Equal weighting should be given to different areas ofacademic excellence (research, teaching and community service) so that both men and women can excel in areas of theirchoice or in areas where they are very good at. Currently more emphasis is put on research in the polytechnics.

4.3Human Resources for Gender-Sensitive Development

Human resource development will also play a key role in ensuring gender-sensitive development in terms ofmanagement.This calls for restructuring all departments to mainstream gender. Therefore a properly constituted human resource department that is gender sensitive with some kind of related training is essential. Meanwhile, commitment by senior management of Koforidua Polytechnic for example and utilizing more on the strengths and opportunities in gender mainstreaming ascompared to weaknesses and threats (as detailed in the table below) can foster development in our polytechnics.

4.4 SWOT Analyses for Gender Mainstreaming at Koforidua Polytechnic

Strengths	Opportunities
i) Equal opportunity for women and men to access Polytechnic programmes	i) An educated workforce ready to learn
ii) Female Rector who can be a role model to students and faculty	ii) Enhanced employment opportunities
iii) Experience in module writing which can the writing of gender policies.	iii) Self actualization of aspirations
	iv) Strengthen linkages and network with other national and international
	v) Existence of 10 polytechnics in 10 regions of Ghana
Weaknesses	**Threats**
i) Over stretched infrastructure	i) Cultural values: gender insensitive habits that are difficult to shelve.
ii) Lack of gender desk	
iii) Lack of gender and anti-sexual harassment policies.	

5. Conclusion

The study findings seem to confirm the Moser Frame work. Consequently, there are some posts within the Polytechnic set up that areappointed taking into consideration the academic orientation of an individual, this include the post of Rector and those ofVice Rectors and other senior management such as the registrar, librarian, deans and directors. Inorder to achieve gender mainstreaming at the Polytechnics there are quite a number of requirements that have to be met and theseinclude adequate expertise on gender issues in the management, coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluationsystem. For instance the Koforidua Polytechnic has an inadequate cohort of female applied science students to draw on from technical/secondary students to achievea gender balance. Koforidua polytechnic can draw inspiration from two different university scenarios. University of Ghana, Legon has a gender policy premised on goals, mission, gender analysis, gender equality, strategies, and performance assessmentratified by senior management and council. Gender issues are directly under Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA). CEGENSA promotes the creation of facilities that meet the needs of female staff and students as guided by its vision and mission.Elsewhere, in University of Education, Winneba decided to expand the gender mainstreaming programme to all faculties and departments through the creation of the Gender Mainstreaming Directorate under the Registrar's Office. Theaim of the directorate, initially established in 2006 is to coordinate gender mainstreaming throughout the university. The goal to promote a gender-friendly, inclusive and secure environment, ensure that gender balance in student enrolment andperformance is improved. They also advocate for increased recruitment, promotion and retention of female staff,work for theengendering of the University curriculum, make provision for the training of a critical mass of staff in gender analysis skills. Therefore, the polytechnics canpromote and advocate for the integration of gender in research, promote the integration of gender perspectives in the polytechnics' outreach programmes. Gender office will advocate and promote increased participation of women in decision-making, ensure thatpolytechnics policy on women's access to benefits, allowances and other entitlements is streamlined, regularized and whollyimplemented and to promote the use of gender sensitive language in all forms of communication. .

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