EQUITY IN THE ACADEMIC WORKPLACE: POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS FOR REFORM

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a variety of issues and sub-issues within the realm of equity in the academic workplace or institutions of higher learning. It starts with a clarification of the environments terminology. Debates continue to revolve around the need for preserving excellence, freedom of speech and academic freedom and whether or not equity-based programmes will threaten traditions such as these. There is a fear of displacement on the part of those who have benefited in the past as well as expectation regarding a variety of opportunities, on the part of previously disadvantaged peoples. Also, discussed in this paper are equity issues as they directly impact on academic, administrative and support staff at universities. Labelling, stereotypes, racism, sexism and other issues pertaining to organisational culture are addressed and critically explored. On many an occasion, the focus of equity-based programmes has been on race, with little or no significance attached to the status of women who are either trying to enter, as well as those who are already working or studying within the academic environment. Finally, this paper outlines some considerations with respect to implementing equity programmes on campuses and will conclude with a selection of examples of post-secondary educational institutions with fully operational equity-based programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Academic institutions, in general, given their role in teaching, research and learning, are well placed in society to take leadership in developing and testing strategies for successfully producing human resource skills appropriate to the needs of the nation. Academic institutions have, over the years, prepared people for their respective roles in society. However, many countries on the continent of Africa have experienced, and continue to experience revolutionary changes where policies, which were exclusionary in the past, have been, or are in the process of being replaced with policies and strategies which are based on a more equitable treatment of people.

Proponents of academic freedom who espouse an environment in which free thought and expression flourish, believe that government policies on affirmative action and harassment, whether it be sexual, racial, or otherwise, contradict the tenets of academic freedom. In 1994, universities in Ontario, Canada were engaged in major debates around the provincial government's introduction of the "Framework Regarding the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination in Ontario Universities" (Lougheed, 1994:6).

Some of those involved in the debate felt that policies such as these are an infringement on activities within the classroom and elsewhere on the campus. The professorate indicated that they could be "restrained from speaking out on potentially offensive issues or offering opinions which could offend their students" (Lougheed, 1994:6). It was also pointed out that there is a "distinction between having access to sexist or racially discriminating material in teaching and promoting sexist or racist ideas in the classroom" (Lougheed:1994:6).

Justice Sopinka of the Supreme Court of Canada stated that: "One of the most difficult areas of the law which the Supreme Court has to deal with is free speech ... freedom for one group often poses a threat to others" (Sopinka, 1994:13). From the afore-going, the question of academic freedom and what it means within the context of equity is one of the areas, which is open for review. Academic institutions should review their definition of "academic freedom", as part of their efforts in working towards the achievement of equity.

Often, discussions around equity and affirmative action include a concern that these kinds of programmes will erode the standards and excellence of the institution. One wonders how it is indeed possible to achieve excellence when large numbers of the population do not have access to academic institutions, or when once in, they are expected to work in hostile environments. Also, when staff does not have access to professional development opportunities, what then, is the real meaning of excellence?

The University of Wisconsin in 1988 produced *The Madison Plan* (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988: 158) in which is described their approach to excellence and diversity.

> "The major universities of this country have been the great engines for social mobility. (The) UW-Madison enjoys a proud history of educating many struggling firstgeneration. Wisconsin College students who went on to lead this state and nation. The keys to this university's success have been its accessibility and educational excellence. Today both elements are in jeopardy. (The) UW-Madison remains out of reach to the high school students with the fewest resources. And the quality of the education is seriously compromised by the limited ethnic and cultural diversity of the

faculty, staff and students. A greater emphasis on ethnic diversity in the curriculum and a more consistent consideration of ethnic diversity in the selection and retention of faculty, staff and students are crucial to the university's pursuit educational excellence". (University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1988: 158).

Here we have the idea that educational excellence is inextricably linked with sensitivity to issues associated with access and the implementation of specific plans to bring about inclusivity, as well as the provision of opportunities for individual development within the institution. In this example, excellence means the ability of disadvantaged students to access educational opportunities at the University. Excellence, here, also means having a demographically representative staff, staff who are viewed as role models and with whom students are able to relate with a certain amount of comfort. Another component of excellence in this example is the use of a curriculum, which recognises diversity.

Academic institutions are faced with great challenges in motivating for the introduction of equity-based policies and programmes. In the corporate sector, the bottom line determines the success or failure of a particular course of action. It would appear, from various reports, that diversity in staff composition has had a beneficial effect on the corporate bottom-line. Employees with multilingual ability are in a position to attract clientele and have an effect on their own communities' choices of where they now wish to conduct their business. Unfortunately, for academic institutions, success must be defined in less concrete terms. Success with equity-based initiatives also can take much longer to measure within the academic context. But there are rewards. Morrow quite succinctly states that:

> "Clearly employment equity planning in the public sector presents some difficult challenges. But the rewards in terms of productivity, morale and effective human resource utilisation are great". (Morrow, 1986:632).

TERMINOLOGY

Generally we find three broad groupings of people at academic institutions: academic staff, administrative and support staff and students. It is for this reason that equity at academic institutions is sometimes referred to as employment and educational equity, in order to recognise the status of students as well. In this paper, the term "equity" will include employment equity and educational equity. There are specific instances where separate references will be made with respect to the two groupings of staff and that of students, especially in the section on barriers to access and advancement.

Equity

Equity means "fairness". Equity can be seen as a goal to be achieved. For example, the goal of employment equity for women as stated in the *Ontario Council of Universities Handbook on Employment Equity for Women*, is as follows:

> "The goal of employment equity for women in the universities of Ontario is that men and women be hired, trained, promoted and paid on an equal basis". (Council of Ontario Universities, 1988:3).

Equal Opportunity

Equal opportunity can also be seen as a goal to be achieved. Dr Mamphela Ramphele (1994) has defined equality of opportunity as "creating equal opportunities for employees or potential employees ... to ensure that all staff are exposed to the opportunities that will help them to fulfil their individual potential" (Ramphele, 1994:11).

An example of creating equal opportunities is by providing training and developmental opportunities for junior staff so that they may be able to compete on an equal footing for promotion to more senior level posts.

Affirmative Action

Nelson Veersmay (1996), Director of Affirmative Action Programmes and Information in the South African Public Service Commission, describes affirmative action as follows:

> "Affirmative Action could mean positive actions by government, Organised Labour and Workers within the Public Service to develop programmes and guidelines in respect of obstacles encountered by those who have suffered discrimination in the workplace through any means including race, gender, creed, poverty, education, disability, age or health. Affirmative Action can thus be regarded as a measure whereby the elimination of inequalities brings about social peace as well as harmonious employment practices and sound relations. It can, therefore be viewed as a vigorous programme of action plans, relating to upliftment and guarantees for equal opportunities. (Veersamy, 1996:1).

Within the workplace, an example of an affirmative action initiative is, establishing a series of internships whereby newly graduated students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds are placed in temporary employment within the academic institution in order to gain work experience. This provides them with the opportunity of competing for and/or obtaining a permanent placement. Within an equity framework, affirmative action can be seen as "a strategy to achieve set goals, and not an end in itself". (Ramphele, 1995:10).

As part of the transformation process at the University of Cape Town, opportunities for potential academic staff are offered through Junior and Post-doctoral Research Fellowships (*Equal Opportunity at UCT*: 1992-1994:8). The University of Cape Town has also established a Temporary Employment Bureau (TEMBU), as part of the Human Resource Management Department, which provides secretarial training and temporary work placements for black secretaries.

Having had this experience at UCT, these secretaries are then able to compete for permanent posts at the University. Equity can thus be seen as a goal, which can be achieved through the implementation of specific affirmative action strategies.

Designated Groups

Designated groups are "groups selected as the focus of equity programmes because their labour market experience reveals long-standing patterns of high unemployment, lower than average pay rates or concentration in low status pay jobs" (Council of Ontario Universities, 1988:229). Designated groups in South Africa at the present time are persons who are black and/or women. "Black" refers to African, Coloured, and Indian peoples; and "women" means both black and white women. Persons with disabilities could also be included as a designated group in South Africa, depending on the outcome of consultations on South Africa's recently introduced Green Paper on Employment and Occupational Equity (Republic of South Africa, 1996:14). In Canada, the designated groups are women, both black and white; visible minorities (for example, Chinese, black and Pakistani peoples, among others); aboriginal (indigenous) peoples and persons with disabilities. In the Equal Opportunity Policy of the local government council of Hammersmith and Fulham in London, England, the designated groups to which the policy applies are black people, Irish people, women, lesbians, gay men and people with disabilities (Council of Hammersmith and Fulham, 1988:5). The identification of designated groups within a country is thus an individual process, which is based on the history of past inequities within that particular country.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS AND ADVANCEMENT

Academic Staff

One of the central principles of any equity programme is the inclusion of measures for ensuring that designated groups have access to opportunities for employment within the institution. In other words, one of the reasons for introducing an equity programme is the fact that designated groups are either not represented at all or are not adequately represented within the hierarchies of the institution. A statistical review of where designated groups are employed within the institution will provide an indication as to whether or not the staff composition of the institution is demographically representative

of the population of the country. It may not always be possible to achieve the targeted level of representivity immediately because factors such as availability of skills within a particular discipline may affect the length of time it will take to achieve representivity within that particular discipline. For example, it may be necessary to introduce additional interventions such as promoting and facilitating the increase of women post-graduate students in the science, engineering and technology disciplines in order to increase the pool from which to draw women academic staff in those disciplines.

Statistics from the Committee of University Principles of South Africa indicate that in 1990 only 6% of all university educators in South Africa were African educators. (Bethlehem, 1992:10).

According to the Report of the National Commission on Higher Education in South Africa (*National Commission on Higher Education Discussion Document, Framework for Transformation*, 1996:16), 65% of all teaching/research staff in South Africa were white. The report goes on to say that most African staff at academic institutions are employed in service jobs while most white people are employed as academic staff. When we consider that 76% of South Africa's population is African (*South African Survey*, 1996:8), there are clearly major gaps in the participation by African people as academic staff in academic institutions in South Africa.

In order to improve access to academic institutions by designated groups, it is necessary to review the way in which policies and practices such as recruitment and selection operate within the institution. For example, word-of-mouth recruitment in a predominantly white male workforce is likely to perpetuate the exclusion of designated group members from that workforce. It is important that designated group members have access to information about available posts at the institution. Expanding the advertising strategy to include advertisements in local community publications or through posters displayed in strategic locations, the use of advertisements in languages other than English, where appropriate, and ensuring that the text is culturally and gender sensitive, are some possible considerations. Also, going to where designated group members are, is important as it shows an effort at being inclusive in the search. Extensive "networking among designated groups to encourage people to apply for positions" (Ramphele, 1994:20) is another means of broadening the pool of applicants. Conferences, professional organisations and even cultural and special interest organisations could yield potential designated group candidates.

In the selection process, inflated requirements for a particular post have the effect of out-screening a number of applicants. For example, for many years in Canada, members of the South East Asian Community and women had difficulty in gaining access to jobs in the police force because of the height requirements attached to being an officer of law. Those requirements have been removed so that members of these communities are now able to make contributions to the law enforcement profession through their multilingual

skills and skills in working with women who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Selection committees have the difficult task of selecting the best candidate for the job. However, consideration of the transferability of skills as well as potential to learn could result in appropriate choices as well. If, during the selection process, a promising member of a designated group is identified, he/she could be employed in a developmental post as a means of increasing the pool of potential future applicants. (Ramphele, 1994:21).

In order to create awareness among selection committee members of the relationship of equity to recruitment and selection, training of the selection committee in the purpose of the institution's employment equity programme and the need for sensitivity in communication with regard to both culture and gender, would assist in facilitating a fair process. Unstructured interviews and interview proceedings, which are not documented, could introduce inequity into the selection process.

In the absence of some form of structure where the selection committee uses a spontaneous approach to questioning and where interviewees are not questioned based on criteria for the post, some interviewees could out-perform others, not necessarily because they have greater skill or qualifications for the post, but because of the kind of questions which happened to be asked of them. Absence of documentation could result in the omission of key points, which could have a bearing on decisions about the suitability of the candidate.

Equity does not stop at the recruitment and selection process. Once the new staff person enters the academic institution, equity considerations with respect to professional development and career advancement are important in relation, not only to the retention of staff, but also to the academic development of the institution. If the new academic staff person is brought in without being given a real job with real responsibilities, the person will have great difficulty in settling in and will also lack the career-building experiences, which are an important part of academic life. It is often helpful for the chairperson or head of department to develop a work plan together with the new staff person which takes into account the person's skills and interests. Doing this will assist in ensuring a meaningful experience with a balanced workload. For example, an academic staff person employed on a contract and who may be interested in gaining experience in supervising a post-graduate student's work may find that the contract period is not long enough to settle in to the new institution, to meet the teaching, research and administrative requirements of the job and to pursue his or her interests in working with a post-graduate student. In developing a work plan, this can be taken into consideration. Another barrier to advancement in the academic sphere, includes lack of access to information about specific requirements for the achievement of tenure and lack of knowledge about how the notching system works and what research, publication or other requirements should be completed in order to move beyond performance barriers. Environmental factors often referred to as the organisational culture, or institutional

culture can also have a negative effect on the performance and advancement of staff. Organisational culture is defined by Dr Ramphele as "the social and structural environment that employees work within ... it is largely the product of the values, habits, communication patterns, history and assumptions of all members of the organisation and the way that the organisation is structured." At its most simple level, organisational culture can be defined as "the way things are done around here." (Ramphele, 1994:22). In order for a new person coming into the institution to understand the culture of the institution, a well-constructed induction programme is essential. In addition to an induction to the system and policies of the University, an in depth induction to the department and faculty are essential in order to establish a sense of belonging and independence. Something as simple as not being familiar with how a particular computer package functions or where to find a staff manual or how to operate the photocopying machine can be quite a destabilising experience for some new staff. Furthermore, inductions are important in that they provide opportunities for academic staff to become aware of the specific expectations for teaching, student evaluation, research and administration of the particular faculty or department. The way in which communication occurs in an academic workplace can also affect the work and performance of staff.

Is academic staff encouraged to make their concerns known to senior departmental staff, and if so, is there some assurance that their concerns will be addressed? Is communication carried on with respect or does staff feel they are being harassed?

Labelling and stereotyping are other negative forms of communication, which can severely impede progress on the job. The presence of negative environmental factors points to the need for a policy and procedural intervention aimed at eliminating the negative behaviour and for handling complaints resulting from that behaviour.

Women

In addition to the afore-going, there are a number of issues of particular concern to women, either as prospective academic staff or as currently employed academic staff. Women are under-represented at South African universities. In 1993, 68% of the total research/teaching staff at academic institutions in South Africa were men, while 38% were women (*National Commission on Higher Education Discussion Document: A Framework for Transformation*, 1996:16). In 1992, across all universities in South Africa, women comprised 26% of all senior lecturers, 15% of associate professors and only 6% professors. (*National Commission on Higher Education Discussion Document: A Framework for Transformation*, 1996:16). *The World Bank Report on Higher Education of 1995/96* stated that

"Although there is little evidence to substantiate a link between the number of women faculty and the number of female students at the tertiary level, it has been suggested that lack of women as role models within non-traditional fields may have an influence on the acceptability of women in fields where women have been traditionally underrepresented. The lack of female faculty has often resulted in inequality in education delivery and high drop-out rates for women." (*The World Bank Report on Higher Education*, 1995/96:41).

In order to increase the number of women as role models in non-traditional fields of study, the Association of African Universities (AAU) and UNESCO have established a Chair for Women in Science and Technology in Africa. The first incumbent is Linda Makhubu at the University of Swaziland. She will launch a project to promote the participation of women in science and technology in tertiary institutions. Initially the project will be directed at the Southern African Region. The long-term goal is an African-wide project. Included in this initiative is the popularisation of science and technology in schools and rural communities so as to attract more girls to the pursuance of scientific disciplines in schools.

Historically, a number of factors have had an enormous effect on women's participation in the academic workforce. Women in South Africa only really began participating in academia as recently the 1960s (Bethlehem, 1992:2).

In another example, regulations of the Department of Education and Training, prevented the University of the North from employing married women on a full time basis until the 1980s. In addition, the enrolment and retention of girls in primary and secondary educational systems remains an issue of major concern in Africa, today. At a recent gathering in Kenya, of African Ministers of Education, University Vice-Chancellors and representatives of major international donors, Professor Luke Uka Uche, editor-in-chief of the Pan Africa News Agency in Senegal described the continent of Africa as "the continent with the least educated women in the world." (*The Argus*, 1996:26). The Forum for African Women Educators (FAWE) conducted research, which showed that "more than 26 million African girls, most living in rural areas, were out of school. They had either never enrolled or had dropped out. This figure is expected to rise to 36 million by 2000." (*The Education of Girls and Women in Africa*, 1994:4). Some reasons given for the lack of education of females in Africa is, poverty, prejudice and large numbers resulting from a population explosion (*The Education of Girls and Women in Africa*, 1994:5). These factors have major implications, not only for women's participation in academic institutions, but also for the development of skills to meet human resource needs.

Women academics were interviewed as part of a research project on Race and Gender Discrimination in University Employment Practices. This research was commissioned by the Union of Democratic University Staff Associations in South Africa. The women

academics that were interviewed identified sexist comments and sexual remarks in the tearoom as being offensive and something, which "undermines women's ability to build a reputation as a serious academic." (Bethlehem, 1992:2). This, in turn, has an effect on opportunities for women academics to be promoted.

Students

Prospective students and students already enrolled in academic institutions also face a number of barriers to access and advancement. Many children, especially in rural areas, have either not had the opportunity to attend school or if they did, their education did not prepare them adequately for entry into institutions of higher learning. In South Africa, for example, the segregated educational system of the past where only white education was heavily resourced, black South Africans were excluded from quality academic education and technical training (*National Commission on Higher Education Discussion Document: A Framework for Transformation*, 1996:10). Access to tertiary education by women students is also affected by poor enrolments of African girls in primary schools in African countries. The Forum for African Women Educators (FAWE) conducted research, which indicated the following reasons for the low school enrolment of African girls:

> " ... causes of poor enrolment ranged from the low regard in which females were held to the belief that educating boys was more important in the light of their ultimate role as family heads and breadwinners.
>
> There was also the myth that boys were more intelligent than girls, the fact that there were fewer opportunities for girls in the labour market, the need to keep females as a source of home care and, income as domestic labour." (*The Argus*, 1996:26).

Reasons similar to those quoted above, were given by the World Bank (*World Bank Report on Higher Education*, 1995/96:34), with respect to the small pool of women students completing secondary school in a number of countries, world-wide. The Report goes on to say that because of the poor quality of secondary education received by girls in Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia, women are at a disadvantage in writing university entrance exams.

Another barrier to access for rural students is the distance to major centres where academic institutions are usually located. This is more of an obstacle for women because of parents' concern about the distance from home and also the fact that women students will be living alone in residence. (*World Bank Report on Higher Education, 1995/96*: 35).

A possible link between language of instruction and students' academic performance was indicated in research conducted by the Equal Opportunity Research Project at the University of Cape Town (Hall, Rex and Sutherland: 1995:13-16). Students, for whom English was their second language, were at a disadvantage as indicated by their poor academic performance. (Hall, Rex and Sutherland, 1995:15).

Despite the fact that there are a number of factors which are beyond the control of academic institutions, a number of measures aimed at working towards the alleviation of the effects of the barriers experienced by students, are being implemented in varying degrees by institutions of higher learning. In their efforts to increase access by students from designated groups, a number of academic institutions are working directly with schools in organising career awareness programmes and orienting students to the various programmes of study, which are available at their institutions. The University of Cape Town has put in place special admissions programmes, increased its residence accommodation, and has in place, a financial aid system that includes loans and bursaries. (*Equal Opportunity at UCT*, 1992-1994:5). The inclusion of academic development programmes and writing skills centres are other measures, which have been adopted to facilitate successful academic performance by students.

Administrative and Support Staff

In addition to the recruitment and selection measures discussed earlier, with respect to academic staff, there are some additional measures which could be considered in relation to administrative and support staff.

In order to increase the pool of potential candidates for posts in the special skills areas of administrative and support sectors, training opportunities, job rotation, special assignments and opportunities for understudying specific jobs known to become vacant, are some options. A planned programme aimed at varying and broadening the experience of administrative and support staff, not only makes additional experience available but also, may provide a welcome change routine for staff engaged in repetitive work. Such a system would, in addition, facilitate the provision of continuous service when staff who are generally responsible for particular functions, are on leave.

In situations where designated group representation is low, the University of Cape Town has introduced an internship programme through which new University graduates from designated groups have the opportunity of gaining work experience through temporary appointment in the Human Resource Management Department.

The First National Bank of South Africa has an internal development programme, which includes adult basic education and training. This programme consists of five levels with the fifth level enabling those with suitable marks to be eligible for technikon or university

entrance. (Harverson, 1996:8). Sometimes staff employed within the lower levels of academic institutions are forgotten. Many are there only because opportunities were not available to them in the past.

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities have been disadvantaged as a result of lack of access to employment. Very often disability is interpreted to mean only physical disability as represented by a person in a wheelchair. There are people with other disabilities such as visual or auditory impairment who are also able to function in specific jobs with the use of technical aids. The Personnel Department of the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, for example, arranged for sign language interpretation at computer training sessions to enable hearing-impaired employees to learn computer systems. (University of Saskatchewan, 1991:60). With the aid of tape recorders, visually impaired students are able to study lecture materials. Attention to making buildings and facilities accessible to persons in wheelchairs is important and may only be possible as new buildings are being built, or older ones renovated. The provision of parking areas for persons with physical disabilities, as close as possible to the buildings in which they work, as well as installing Braille lettering on the outside and inside of lifts, are other examples of ways in which to facilitate physical access by persons with disabilities.

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING SPECIAL MEASURES

To achieve the goal of equity, it is generally necessary to adopt special measures or initiatives specifically for members of designated groups. (University of Saskatchewan, 1991:59). Some examples of special measures are listed, not all as requirements of an equity programme, but as options from which courses of action may be chosen, depending upon the needs of the academic institution, its staff and students.

Mentoring Programme

A mentoring programme is defined as:

> "A structure and series of processes designed to create an effective mentoring relationship, guide the desired behaviour change of those involved, and evaluate the results for the protégés, the mentors and the organisation with the primary purpose of systematically developing the skills and leadership abilities of less experienced members of an organisation." (Owen: 1991 cited in McGregor, 1994:87).

A mentor may act as a source of information in orienting a new member of staff to the expectations of the institution, provide feedback, and be of assistance in times of crisis or difficulty, among others. Benefits to the institution from a mentoring programme include increased productivity, increased organisational communication and understanding and reduction in staff turnover.

Safety

In order for staff and students to make maximum use of the institution's libraries and study halls after hours and to ensure safety after dark when walking on the campus at night, a SAFEWALK programme may assist. Such a programme would offer escort to a particular destination, such as the parking lot. Adequate lighting is also helpful. A safety audit will assist in identifying needs on specific campuses.

Child Care

A childcare programme could encourage women to consider a career in academia and could provide the time needed for research and thus career advancement.

The need for childcare at academic institutions is a result of various factors that play a role in family dimensions, they include the need for a second income - therefore childcare programmes are essential to provide opportunities to women who would like to enter the job market.

Single parent families need support regarding childcare as it makes the workplace more accessible. Childcare programmes reduce absenteeism, improves attitudes towards work, and improves public perception of the institution. Academically related benefits include observation for early childhood development or a psychology programme, practicum or field work in a number of areas.

The need for a childcare programme will become more important as gender equality is reviewed and adjusted with new policies. The roles of men and women in the family are changing and employers are adapting policies to fit in with these social changes.

Options for childcare programmes include a center where children can be left for short periods, a play-group and toy lending library in addition to day-care facilities, a service to advise parents on childcare options.

Requirements for a childcare center must comply with international standards; they include, a certain number of staff with relevant qualifications, a suitable venue regarding size, proximity, washroom facilities, food preparation and access to outdoors play areas.

A childcare survey will establish the need for a programme and the extent thereof.

Interactive Distance Education Programmes

To decrease the distance to institutions of higher learning, educational opportunities could be extended to rural and remote areas. This can be done through the organisation of extension classes or through decentralising training programmes.

Interactive distance education programmes can also be achieved effectively through satellite linkages whereby students in many remote or rural centres are able to attend lectures at specific sites through live video transmission. Such a system also enables discussion among the students in the various centres as well as with the instructor.

Anti Harassment Policies and Procedures

Policies which prohibit sexual, racial or any other type of harassment and which include a mechanism for filing complaints and an indication of the consequences of such actions, can assist in transforming the work environment into one which is respectful of all. Policies for non-sexist language and behavior, women in non-traditional areas, and sexual harassment should be developed and updated at regular intervals.

The way in which language is used can be perceived in different ways. Awareness of the descriptive and prescriptive use of language must be created. Awareness must also be created regarding stereotyping and the negative perceptions associated with such use of language. (E.g. women referred to as "girls", "missy" or "dear"). The use of language can also constitute gender harassment when stereotype terms such as "dumb blonde", "men don't cry" are used. Although gender-neutral language is often perceived as humorous, policies should be developed to advance the use of terms such as "the Chair", "the Board" and "the Cabinet". Language must not belittle employees, requests rather than commands should be used as well as status-bound use of first names. Defining a person, as a function and patronizing must be avoided.

Programmes followed traditionally by women seem to have a lower employment value and are at risk of devaluation. (An example at UP is the B.I.S. Library Science degree). Awareness should be created among women regarding other areas of study as well as the assurance that employers will be open to employ women in non-traditional areas.

Women in non-traditional programme of study need support and fair treatment from fellow students as well as lecturers. Multi-disciplinary study, linking Humanities and Social Sciences with Natural Sciences is one way in which to facilitate women's access to non-traditional courses.

Because women who do study non-traditional programmes are likely to be the minority in the classrooms, these programmes should be non-sexist and allow women to fully participate in class as well as take part in career planning, professional networks, and have access to information regarding employers committed to employment equity.

Modification of Admission Criteria for Designated Groups

Modification of admission criteria will facilitate access to academic institutions and can also be used to facilitate entry into specific areas of study where designated groups are underrepresented, for example, in the Gambia a new admission criterion is being established for primary teacher training institutes to increase the number of women students. The goal of this initiative is to increase the number of female teachers in areas traditionally held by male teachers, such as science and mathematics and to provide role models for school-age girls. (World Bank, 1995/96:40).

Part-Time Study

The ability to enrol in part-time programmes of study to continue their education is, for many, the only option available. For many it is necessary to combine study with paid employment or with childcare. Thus, programmes of study, which incorporate a part-time option, would greatly assist in increasing, access to higher education.

Because part-time students spend almost more time travelling between work, classes and home it is important that class schedules be negotiated with the lecturers. (E.g. One 2-hour class per week rather than two or three 40 minute classes on different days of the week).

Lecturers should inform students of any changes in class schedules as students often drive long distances to attend class after hours only to find that the lecturer is unable to attend the class. A child-care programme at the University, especially for single parents who have to attend classes late at night will make part-time study more accessible.

Safety on campus after hours is of major importance. The campus should be lit properly and security guards must be on duty. A safe, designated and exclusive parking area should be made available for part time students on the campus. A safe waiting area must be available for those who depend on public transport (i.e. an on campus bus stop).

Employers must be understanding towards students, especially during tests and exams as these are often scheduled during office hours. Incentive schemes in cooperation with the university will motive part-time students to continue towards post-graduate study. This will benefit the employer as well as the university.

Employee Assistance Programme

Employee assistance programmes are intended to assist employees who are experiencing difficulties in their personal or professional lives. These programmes generally include a counselling component together with a means of facilitating a resolution to the problem.

Other ways to assist staff include flexible work hours and special leave such as maternity leave, adoption leave, extended leave and personal leave.

Spousal Employment Policy

Special measures by the academic institution to assist newly appointed academic staff in conducting a job search for their spouses would assist in attracting and retaining staff.

Vice-Chancellor's Equity Advisory Committee

Such a committee could advise the vice-chancellor on career equity for designated group staff and students. It could also promote a positive institutional culture, which is conducive to equality.

There are numerous examples of special measures, which have been adopted by academic institutions world-wide. However, the idea is not to present these in a prescriptive context, but rather to encourage discussion about specific needs by individual institutions.

COMPONENTS OF AN EQUITY PLAN FOR ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Central to the successful implementation of an equity plan, is a strong commitment to the principles of equity by the executive of the institution as well as widespread support by the various constituencies of the institution. An equity plan " ... should ... be tied in with an effective human resource management and career development strategy." (Morrow, 1986;632).

Policy Statement

The first step in implementing an equity plan is the issuing of a policy statement either by the governing body of the institution or its chief executive officer. The policy should include a statement of commitment by the institution to the principles of equity and could include a brief summary statement on what the institution's plan hopes to achieve. The policy should be developed in consultation with staff and student representative bodies or unions, representatives of the designated groups and senior administrators.

The following wording provides a rough example. The University of Grassy Park is committed to achieve and maintain a fair and representative workforce and student body through the design and implementation of an Equity Plan. The University's Plan shall consist of measures for the identification and removal of artificial barriers to the selection, hiring, promotion and training of members of the designated groups. The Plan

shall also include measures for the identification and removal of artificial barriers to student access, participation and advancement. The Plan will further include the implementation of special measures in order to enable members of designated groups to compete equally with others.

Assignment of Responsibility for Implementation

For the Plan to be effective, responsibility for implementing the programme should be conferred on a senior administrator in the institution. The role of this senior administrator would be to oversee the content of the Plan, to ensure that the institution's policy is being implemented and that the appropriate consultation is undertaken. The appointment of an Equity Officer, with staff and the provision of office facilities and other resources will enable the development, implementation, ongoing assessment and monitoring of equity initiatives.

Consultation

Consultation in this context is "a continuing process of deliberation in which advice is sought and information exchanged. The intention is to achieve agreement in a form satisfactory to all parties concerned." (Affirmative Action Agency, 1987:11). Consultation should start from the policy development process and should continue through the various stages of implementation. The establishment of an Equity Advisory Committee with representation from the union, staff representative bodies, student bodies, the deans council, and which includes members at large and the Equity Officer could serve as a means through which continuous consultation and deliberation is achieved.

Communications Strategy

It is important that everyone on campus know about the equity policy and plan. The consultation process is not enough to ensure the adequate dissemination of this information. Other options which proved successful at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada (University of Saskatchewan: 1991:2) include the following:

- a memorandum to all employees from the President (Vice-Chancellor) of the University, which introduced the principles of the Equity Plan

- a memorandum from the Equity Officer, which elaborated on the points, mentioned in the President's memorandum

- brochures-one advertising an equity survey and another with questions and answers related to equity

- a logo identifying equity and a poster

- over 40, one-hour information sessions delivered at various campus locations at which employees were authorised to attend during working hours

- articles on equity in the staff and student newspapers

- meetings of the Equity Officer with executives of staff representative groups and unions and the deans council to address questions

- ongoing communications through the provision of equity information to new employees during induction and through mailing equity information to those employees whom are not required to attend induction.

Institutional audit

One of the major objectives of an equity programme is to work towards having a population within all levels of the institution, which is demographically representative of the population of the country. In order to find out to what extent the country's population is represented within all levels of the institution, it is necessary to conduct an institutional audit. An institutional audit should provide information on the workforce with respect to their occupational classification and salary levels. It should also provide information about the recruitment, selection, development and training, promotional opportunities and retrenchment of designated group members. This data will indicate where designated group members are located within the institution as compared with other employees. From this data, it will also be possible to determine whether there is any movement of designated group members through the system or whether they remain static in their posts due to a lack of opportunities for development and promotion. In addition, information on distance travelled to the place of employment, mode of transportation, languages used, language competence, as well as physical facilities for persons with disabilities, will be useful in the development of an equity plan (Republic of South Africa, 1996:36).

Similar information may be assembled for designated group students as compared with other students, to identify the programmes of study in which they are enrolled and at which levels, use of financial aid programmes, advancement through the institution and the use of residence accommodation. Once this set of data has been collected, it will, be useful to obtain statistics on the number of qualified designated group members there are in specific geographical recruitment areas.

This information will not only assist in the development of an equity plan which facilitates increased access by designated group members into areas of the institution where they are underrepresented, but it will also identify skill and academic preparation

(for student admissions), shortages which may exist in relation to the institution's requirements. Based on this information, the institution will then be able to plan development and other strategies aimed at increasing the pool from which employees and students may be recruited. (Ramphele, 1994:16). Statistics on the number of qualified designated group members in specific geographic recruitment areas should be available through census and other government information.

The next step in conducting the institutional audit is the review of human resources policies, practices and systems, both formal and informal, to determine whether they have, or are likely to have an unfavourable effect on the employment status of designated group members. Policies, practices and systems relating to recruitment, testing, selection, development and training, promotional opportunities, job evaluation, conditions of service, employee benefits, allocation of bonuses, casual work, disciplinary action, lay-offs, termination, grievances and internal appeals should be reviewed within the context of the following questions:

- Does this policy or practice promote or hinder equality?

- Legality: Does this policy or practice conform to applicable human rights and employment laws?

- Consistency: Is the policy or practice applied in a consistent manner?

- Adverse impact: does the policy or practice have a negative impact on any designated group?

- Validity: Is this policy or practice objective, and does it accomplish its predictive or evaluative function?

- Job-relatedness: Is the policy or practice based on bona-fide genuine occupational requirements?

- Business necessity: Is the policy or practice necessary for safe and/or efficient operation of this organisation? (University of Saskatchewan, 1991:15).

Policies, practices and systems with reference to student recruitment, admission, and evaluation, financial and, residence accommodation, disciplinary actions, suspensions or expulsions should undergo a similar review.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A STRATEGIC WORK PLAN FOR ACHIEVING EQUITY IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

A strategic plan for achieving equity may include the following components:

• a statement of the purpose of the strategic plan

• an identification of measures required for the achievement of equity, which includes the development of a policy in consultation with relevant stakeholders, and which is further based on the statistical and qualitative data resulting from the institutional audit

• prioritising of measures to be implemented and a categorisation into whether they may be considered for implementation in the short, medium or long term

• the assignment of responsibility for the work involved in the implementation of the equity measures

The objectives of the work plan might include a strategy to inform, educate and sensitise the institution's community about its equity policy and work plan. Another objective could focus on the elimination or modification of policies or practices, which may act as barriers to equity. Efforts to increase the number of designated group members in the areas and levels of the institution where they are underrepresented could be another objective. Facilitating the promotion of designated group members by developing and utilising their skills and the development of a system to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the equity policy and work plan are other possibilities for consideration. The work plan may also address the implementation of special measures to accelerate the process of increasing the participation and advancement of designated group members within the institution.

EQUITY INSTITUTIONS

National governments are playing a major role in ensuring the implementation of measures, which recognise the demographic diversity of their populations, as a means of redressing past disadvantage. Since employment equity is closely linked to human resource development and since it has the potential for enabling increased access to employment, with the associated positive effects on the national economy, a number of national governments have adopted legislation to give effect to employment equity. It should be added, however, that the route the government has taken has not always been quite so straightforward. Social pressure and lobbying by special interest groups in the face of high unemployment rates among designated group members have played an important role in motivating high-level commitment to employment equity.

The government of South Africa, as part of its Reconstruction and Development Programme has, in July 1996, released a Green Paper for discussion and consultation on Employment and Occupational Equity.

The research in preparation for this discussion document included reviews of employment equity policies and programmes of other countries such as Canada. (Verster, 1996).

Canadian academic institutions

The Canadian Employment Equity Act and the Federal Contractors Programme, both of which where adopted in 1986, are directly applicable to academic institutions in Canada. The objective of the Federal Contractors Programme is "to ensure that federal contractors who do business with the government of Canada achieve and maintain a fair and representative workforce." (University of Manitoba, 1993:9).

All suppliers of goods and services to the federal government who employ 100 persons or more and who want to bid on contracts of Cdn. $200,000 or more, are required to commit themselves to employment equity as a condition of their bid. In-depth compliance reviews are conducted by the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission in which records and documents kept by contractors are reviewed. Compliance with the programme criteria and the results obtained are also assessed in such a review. There is an appeal process for contractors as well as sanctions for non-compliance, which include eventual exclusion from bidding on federal government contracts. (*Government of Canada*, 1986: 1,2).

Human rights commissions in Canada, which are governed by federal human rights legislation, play a significant role in relation to the development of equity plans by employers. Employers may have their equity plans reviewed by human rights commissions to ensure that they are in keeping with the various pieces of legislation, which govern employment equity in Canada. Employers may also receive consultative advice from human rights commissions regarding specific workplace policies, procedures or issues. Human rights commissions also hear complaints from the public on employment-related matters and can, in the case of contravention, initiate negotiated settlements or issue remedial orders.

Responsibility for education in Canada is shared by the government of Canada and the provinces of Canada with the government of Canada retaining sole jurisdiction in certain aspects of education. Each of the provinces receives block funding from the federal government for operational purposes and the maintenance of physical structures. Each provincial ministry of education has a universities grants commission which receives funding proposals from academic institutions for the establishment of special

programmes such as literacy programmes, chairs of study, women's studies programmes, and so on. Grants commissions also receive funding proposals from academic institutions for major research projects.

These funding proposals are reviewed by the grants commissions to ensure that they meet the requirements of federal/provincial regulations. It is this financial relationship with the federal government, as well as the fact that academic institutions generally employ well over 100 staff, which extends the applicability of the Employment Equity Act and Federal Contractors Programme to academic institutions in Canada.

This legislation applies to a large proportion of the corporate sector as well. The effects and results of the legislation have produced a ripple effect such that those employees with fewer than 100 employees and who do not contract directly with the federal government are morally induced to adopt employment equity initiatives to avoid employee complaints to the provincial ombudsman (person) or the human rights commissions.

As part of their employment equity initiatives, academic institutions in Canada have established employment equity offices, sexual harassment offices and have, in many cases established an office of Ombudsman which has the function of reviewing and making recommendations in response to complaints about the institution's handling of equity issues.

Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, Canada introduced a project to provide educational upgrading to black and aboriginal students in order to enable them to proceed to university. This transitional year access programme has served to reduce tensions between black and aboriginal students and instructors and between the programme and the University community.

> "This has been attained through the systematic redefinition of difference as an asset and through the provision of non-threatening opportunities to learn about the other group. To reduce tension between the program and the university, the remedial aspect of the program was de-emphasised and its role as a resource centre accentuated." (*Government of Canada*, 1984:133).

Within the Canadian context of equity, corporations and parastatals are co-operating with academic institutions to increase access both to the institutions through bursaries for designated group students as well as access to employment opportunities. Academic institutions have also taken advantage of government incentive programmes, which reward results-oriented equity initiatives.

The University of Zimbabwe

When Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, the University of Rhodesia became the University of Zimbabwe. In 1986, Marshall Murphree, the then Director of the Centre for Applied Social Science at the University of Zimbabwe, delivered a lecture at the University of South Africa. The lecture dealt with the history of the transformation process at the University of Zimbabwe. The aim of this process at that time of transition was to correct the imbalance in the demographic profile of the University.

The article on which this historical overview is based, and in which Murphree's lecture was recorded, is entitled "Affirmative Action Prospectus for South African Universities: Part 1, Affirmative Action in the United States and at the University of Zimbabwe (1998)." The article was published by Dr V Nell and Dr F J van Staden who were, at the time of publication, in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa. Murphree (1975) indicated that tenured black staff comprised 8% of all tenured staff at the then University of Rhodesia. In 1977, Robert Craig, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Rhodesia, proposed that a policy of "vigorous Africanisation" (Nell and van Staden, 1988:22) be adopted in relation to new permanent appointments. By 1980, this policy resulted in tenured black staff comprising 24% of all tenured staff.

In September 1980 Walter Kamba was appointed Vice-Chancellor at the University of Zimbabwe. At that time, the policy of "Africanisation" was renamed the policy of "Zimbabweanisation." This policy included the stipulation that non-Zimbabweans would only be appointed to permanent posts, if no Zimbabwean who was appointable was available.

The next stage in the transformation process was the implementation of a policy, based on the American Affirmative Action model. This policy consisted of three phases: the removal of discrimination, equalisation of opportunity and redressal. "Redressal" was the term used to describe the process of eliminating racial imbalance. This policy was introduced amidst many fears, but by 1986, 44% of the University's staff of about 400, was black.

At the departmental level, the Vice-Chancellor, in 1983, made a series of appointments in which black staff were appointed as chairs of departments. According to Murphree (Nell and Van Staden, 1988:22), concerns about the maintenance of academic standards were addressed through the establishment of an external examiner system, "thus supporting the University's confidence in its own standards at a time of experimentation with staff appointments and promotions" (Nell and Van Staden, 1988-22).

Some of the factors, which contributed to the success of the Zimbabweanisation policy, included the issuing of policy directives from the senior management of the University. Also, the appointment of working groups by the Vice-Chancellor encouraged involvement by the University community in the planning process. Another major factor

contributing to the success of the Zimbabweanisation policy was the removal of racial imbalance, at all levels of the institution, simultaneously.

The examples of the Canadian and Zimbabwean experiences in working towards equity at academic institutions, serves to highlight the importance of recognising the need for individualised strategies, which take into account the individual histories and circumstances of academic institutions within their own individual national frameworks.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to review a number of issues, which give rise to the need for equity programmes within academic institutions. Equity programmes must be implemented in an atmosphere of co-operation and commitment among all sectors of the institution.

Continuous consultation is important as an inclusive means of planning and implementation. Continuous consultation will enable participants in the process to more readily take ownership of the equity initiatives of the institution.

Widespread education and understanding of the institution's equity policy and plan among all sectors and all levels of the institution are also critical to long-term success. These are challenges, which must be accepted not only in the interest of fairness but also to ensure the development of a skilled and productive human resource base.

Judge Rosalie Abella, Commissioner, Canadian Royal Commission on Equality in Employment (1994) said:

> "Equality is, at the very least, freedom from adverse discrimination. But what constitutes adverse discrimination changes with time, with information, with experience, and with insight. What we tolerated as a society one hundred, fifty, or even ten years ago is no longer necessarily tolerable. Equality is thus a process - a process of constant and flexible examination, of vigilant introspection, and of aggressive openmindedness." (Abella: 1984).

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