**CHAPTER 5 − ACCESS AS SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA FOUNDATION YEAR PROGRAMME −UPFY**

## 5.1   Introduction

In the previous chapters, various conceptions of social justice and their educational implications were discussed. In summary, these views are the conservative conception of social justice and its utilitarian − confirmatory function, the liberal tradition of social justice and reformation and the radical view of social justice and transformation. The previous chapters also furnished an analysis of the transformation agenda of higher education in South Africa by means of a critical discussion of the transformation pillars of higher education. In this analysis, it was indicated that increased access and broadened participation in higher education comprises one of the policy agendas informed by social justice as one of its goals to redress the imbalances and inequalities of the past. However, the issue of access falls short of promoting radical social justice because it is more fully informed by the neo-liberal paradigm that perceives the economic or market value of access instead of by the holistic and transformation value of access advanced by radical social justice. Consequently, for access to genuinely promote a social justice agenda it also needs to reflect aspects of the radical conception of social justice that informs this study. In chapter four, a brief synopsis of the University of Pretoria and its position on access and the transformation pillars of higher education was provided, and it was shown that the institution is committed to transformation as exemplified in its strategic document regarding the Innovation Generation. However, its stance towards access as social justice revealed conflicting positions dominated by the neo-liberal agenda.

In the present chapter, access to higher education is explored in the case of the University Foundation Year Programme − UPFY. The research question addressed concerns how, and the extent to which, the University of Pretoria has fulfilled the social justice mandate through the UPFY. This will be carried out at a conceptual level, firstly by locating access as a social justice imperative within the broader debates with regards to a global conceptualisation of access in order to illustrate how it complements the agenda of radical social justice discussed in Chapter 2. Secondly, at a more experiential and practical level, the research question will be addressed by means of a critical

analysis of the interview data obtained from the participants in the UPFY case study. Lastly, recommendations on how the UPFY can best fulfil the social justice agenda underlying this study will be furnished.

## 5.2    Access to Higher Education as a Social Justice Agenda

The achievement of social justice is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century and education has been noted as a vehicle for accomplishing its objectives to reduce oppression, inequality and other social problems. The rationale for education as a vehicle in this respect is informed by the human capital argument that investment in education is a key to the socio-economic development that would improve the quality of life of all citizens (Schultz, 1970) in the long term. Related to this view of education is the liberal notion that it has also added egalitarian benefits that would promote equality in society (Bowles & Gintis, 2001). The socio-economic and private returns on investment in education are crucial on a global scale and have been the goals of Education for All – EFA (Smanoff, 2002) and the Millennium Development Goals (World Bank). During the current century, the demand for increased access to and participation in higher education is even more urgent owing to the cultural, economical and political importance of the post secondary sector to the future of democratic societies (Giroux and Schmidt, 2004). The importance lies in the fact that this sector continues to build on the great democratic and civil rights struggles of the 20th century which advanced education as a human right with the power to transform society, so that principles of justice become a lived experience for all. In the current era of a knowledge driven society, expanded access to education has become a necessary tool for ensuring social justice. In the South African context, issues of access are similarly crucial to the transformation agenda of higher education and of the state and are embodied in one of the transformation pillars discussed in chapter three.

Studies across the world are in agreement that social justice is a key concern in current educational policy and practice. The achievement of social justice as theorised in this study entails the provision of equal opportunities to all citizens, the promotion of a human rights culture and freedom from all forms of oppression and discrimination as advocated by Young (2000) as well as the liberation of space proposed by Ramphele (2002). Important as it is, social justice is quite complex in its application or

implementation, particularly with reference to education. If we were living in a utopian context, social justice would not be a relevant consideration because all would be treated equally and the socio-economic benefits would be distributed equitably. The reality of the world that we all live in is that people are not equal, resources and the socio-economic system do not promote equality and that these factors render questions of social justice imperative (Clark, 2006:275).

The elements of radical social justice in education are found in the writings of leftist scholars who argue that in the pursuit for a just society there need to be just institutions, curriculum justice and equity pedagogy (Clark, 2006:285). Equity pedagogy involves teaching strategies and environments that help diverse students attain the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to function effectively within a just, democratic society (Banks et al., 1995:152). This implies that, ideally, institutions of learning which promote social justice need to ensure open access, and promote the success of their students. The three progressive discourses that enliven social justice are critical pedagogy, cultural studies and the anti-globalisation movement. The common feature of these discourses is the call for education whose goal is to transform the socio-economic status quo of neo-liberalism and globalisation and recommend socially just alternatives (Hytten, 2006:222).

In other words, the vision and promise of social justice can be expressed as follows:

> First it asks us to uncover, examine, and critique the values and politics that undergird educational decisions and practices, even as we also explore the more instrumental issues of organizing curriculum and instruction. Second, it compels us to challenge educational common sense and to ask important questions about why we do the things we do in schools and who benefits from them. Third, it calls for us to attend to the ways in which schooling often contributes to the creation, maintenance and reproduction of inequalities, particularly along lines of race, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and other categories, ultimately so we can construct more empowering alternatives (Hytten, 2006:223).

The above passage illustrates that access to higher education needs to be more empowering and liberating for students so that they can critically question the status quo in order to transform it into better alternatives. Access, as theorised by the radical tradition of social justice, moves beyond the obsession with numbers to a more holistic empowerment of students so that they can make a meaningful contribution to the development of democracy. Thus access needs to be informed by the elements of social justice education.

## 5.3 The Elements of Social Justice Education Related to Access to Education

Since social justice is crucial and its implementation even more so, Clark argues that it can only gain impetus if it is utilised as a standard against which policies and practices can be judged (Clark, 2006:281). The tangible yet theoretical underpinnings of social justice that promise empowerment and liberation are found in the principles of social justice education, of which four key processes could bring about social justice in any educational environment. According to Bell these are:

- Dialogue;

- Democratic decision making;

- Student centred critical pedagogy; and

- The analysis of oppression and systems of power (Hackman and Rauscher, 2004:4).

In addition to the above, social justice education possesses five components that lead to more equitable learning and critical learning environments:

- Content mastery – factual information;

- Tools for action and social change;

- Tools for personal reflection;

- An awareness of multicultural group dynamics; and

- Tools for critical analysis (of systems of oppression) (Hackman, 2005: 103 - 104).

The abovementioned components enable learners to experience learning in a more holistic manner and empower them to interact with others from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, it enables them to relate their learning experiences to wider and broader socio-economic issues with the purpose of making the world a more just and better place for everyone.

Another educational trend that also encompasses certain theoretical underpinnings of social justice education is Universal Instructional Design (Hackman and Rauscher, 2004:118). Although UID has its origin in architectural and building science with the objective that construction building structures are accessible to all people, when applied to education it means utilising instructional strategies which ensure that the diverse body of students in any one institution can be accommodated (Silver, n.d.:1). Several institutions of higher education around the world have latched on to the notion of UID. The following principles devised at the University of Guelph are instructive:

- Accessible and fair use;

- Flexibility in the use of participation and presentation;

- Straightforwardness and consistency;

- Information is explicitly presented and readily perceived;

- Supportive learning environment;

- Minimise or eliminate unnecessary physical effort or requirement; and

- Learning space accommodates both students and method (University of Guelph, 2003:1-4).

According to Silver, one of the proponents of the theory and practice of UID, the theory thereof is important to higher education because, currently, such institutions receive students from diverse backgrounds with regards to race, gender, class, ethnicity and disability, and in order to accommodate this diverse body of students, they need policies

that support full integration informed by universal social justice (Silver, n.d.:1). In other words, higher education needs to be informed by the theory of inclusion, and social justice, in order to meet the needs of the diverse body of students:

> More specifically, UID focuses on educational equity like multicultural education and social justice education, UID is designed to meet the needs of students who have historically been underrepresented, disempowered and oppressed within educational institutions. Furthermore, UID, multicultural education and social justice education call for educational reform as a means for actively engaging all students in the learning process by placing students at the core of educational planning (Pliner & Johnson, 2004:108).

A similar trend or educational theory that promises social justice is inclusive education. In principle, in an inclusive institution, diversity is celebrated and valued, the curriculum and delivery process accommodates all students and conscious steps are taken to ensure that institutional resources are accessed and used equally by all (Nunan et al., 2000:72-73). The main objective of inclusive education at all levels of schooling is to reinforce social good as well as individual benefit by opening up access and further creating an environment that promotes the capabilities of all, culturally and economically (Nunan, 2000:87-86). As noted, advocates of inclusive education are aware that it is a contested terrain which is perceived as unachievable and undesirable by opponents but they maintain that, for the sake of promoting social justice, inclusive education is a more appropriate standard of excellence.

The theoretical underpinnings of social justice and other related educational trends and philosophies such as social justice education, inclusive education, critical pedagogy and universal instruction design, though originating from diverse backgrounds, are united in promoting and opening up access and encouraging the success of all students, regardless of race, class, gender or ethnic origin. The diagram below attempts to sketch this connection.
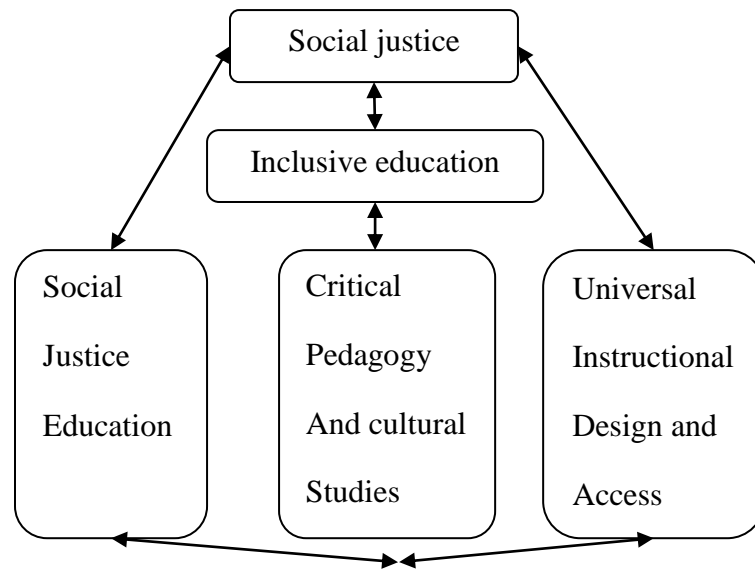
Figure 5.1 − Social justice and related educational theories

In Figure 5.1 I develop a representation of the elements of social justice education which have the potential for facilitating access and the success of students from diverse backgrounds in higher education. The elements encompass inclusivity as opposed to exclusion, and a critical pedagogy, as opposed to the compliance pedagogy associated with conservative traditional education. All these aim to provide empowering and liberating educational encounters while advocating an engaged citizenry and democracy.

Figure 5.1 is also an attempt to illustrate that teaching for social justice must be embedded in teaching and learning encounters in order to promote democracy and overcome oppression at all levels of society, institutional and global, because in contemporary society, both in the West and in the developing world, certain groups are privileged more than others, leading to widespread oppression and some form of complacency on the part of the oppressed and oppressors. In the contexts of these injustices it is imperative for teaching to advance social justice. Teaching for social justice means recognising marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination in their multiple forms and then taking action to interrupt the cycle of oppression so as to foster the quest for social democratic futures for all. This implies infusing social justice into

every aspect of teaching and learning – curriculum, pedagogy and learning as illustrated in Figure 5.1 – in an interconnected manner showing the continuous link between and interrelatedness of the various aspects of teaching for social justice. The position of teaching for social justice that this study supports is in close affinity with the position of leftist scholars such as Freire (1997) and McLaren (2003). In this regard, Freire in the seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1979), written thirty years ago, is still relevant today in arguing that the goal of teaching is to focus on conscientising students to be activists against all forms of oppression and promote social justice. McLaren (2005) in similar vein stressed that teaching for social justice entails the education of students to counteract the oppressive nature of capitalism and advance radical social change.

In this study, I argue that for social justice to be genuinely implemented, the principles of teaching for social justice need to frame the total teaching and learning encounters. Thus the concept of inclusion as prescribed in Figure 2 is to be adopted as a social justice strategy of achieving access and success for all students from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, inclusion entails utilising UID so that students with diverse learning abilities are accommodated. Social justice education not only entails inclusion but also crucial elements of critical consciousness and awareness of systems of oppression and exclusion, with the goal of emancipation and freedom for all. In this manner, the project of the Enlightenment is furthered through critical consciousness and the quest for freedom. Social justice education is also grounded in the intellectual ancestry of critical theory as discussed in chapter two.

Social justice calls for equity in terms of access, participation and success rates, which has universally formed part of reform efforts in higher education, although to varying degrees. Among the various motivating factors for this call, a prominent one in the context of globalisation is the increased importance of the role of higher education in producing skills for the global economy – furnishing both human and social capital while meeting the social justice mandate of accommodating marginalised groups.

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In response to this call, diverse strategies or programmes emerged in an attempt to mainstream diverse students from marginalised backgrounds. Throughout the world, widening participation in higher education is central to education policies. It involves different types of interventions which Osborne (2003) classifies into three types: in-reach, out-reach and flexible programmes. In-reach access refers to those programmes that focus on recruiting potential students into higher education, for example female learners and learners from disadvantaged and marginalised communities and backgrounds. Out-reach programmes concentrate on partnerships with employers and the community. Flexible programmes refer to access through distance learning, recognition of prior learning and usage of information and computer technologies (Osborne, 2003:43). Other studies on access and participation in higher education refer to the three approaches to access: firstly, the academic trend which seeks to attract gifted and talented young people to traditional higher education, and secondly the utilitarian strand which is influenced by the needs of the market and employers and requires higher education in order to effect change that would meet these needs. Thirdly, the transformative trend calls for higher education to create a transformed and progressive institutional culture that focuses on long-term, institution-wide (not atomised pockets of excellence) access initiatives that value diversity and difference as strong points (Jones & Thomas, 2005: 619).

The transformative approach to access possesses impressive credentials for promoting social justice as envisaged in the current research. However, institutions that have adopted this approach are scarce. One example of a reform strategy that has adopted the transformative approach is the University of Queensland's 2010 Strategy in Australia. This strategy has been praised by proponents of the transformative approach such as Taylor (2003) because according to her analysis it considers and prioritises investment in human capital and social capital equally while employing diverse teaching

approaches to meet the needs of diverse communities. The strategy explicitly adopts an inclusive approach to access: "Building success together" (Taylor & Henry, 2003:350). Furthermore, this approach offers an important lesson for South Africa in its pursuit of increasing access and broadening participation as a transformation pillar of higher education.

In order for an access programme to fulfil the mandate of social justice as theorised in the present study and demonstrated in the literature section as being one of progressive and radical action, it needs to be eclectic with a variety of credentials as illustrated in figure 1 above. The main discourse that informs these credentials is social justice education as it seeks to promote holistic learning experiences that seek to transform the classroom while it critically questions practices and conceptions in society that are contrary to transformation. Accordingly, for institutions of learning to meet the criteria set for social justice, access programmes, no matter what their scale, have been important. The question remaining is whether these programmes fulfil all the criteria set for social justice. The section that follows is an attempt to critically discuss the extent to which the UPFY programme does so.

## 5.4   University of Pretoria Foundation Year Programme − UPFY

The UPFY as an access programme to mathematics and science at the University of Pretoria is located in the Science Faculty. It was founded in 2000 as a response to the national imperative to increase access and participation, and the increased national demand for skills in these fields. These are regarded as priority skills in South Africa because of a double imbalance in the South African labour market that led to an undersupply of skilled labour in the fields of mathematics, science and engineering and an oversupply in the social sciences (Woolard et al., 2003:459). The national and general scarcity of mathematics and science skills was also particularly reflected among disadvantaged communities, owing to national trends and their marginalisation during the apartheid era. During that era, African students did not meet the entrance requirements to study in the mathematics and science related fields at university because of the sub-standard schooling they received (Howie, 2003:2).

The South African state responded to this economic and labour crisis by instituting policies that aimed at transforming higher education institutions into being socially relevant to the country's needs, particularly with regards to the scarce skills. These institutions responded to this call by developing policies, programmes and practices that allowed students from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds access to the said disciplines. Increased access to higher education has been supported as a response to social, political and economic imperatives in many countries. The 1997 White Paper on Higher Education Transformation addressed these concerns as discussed in chapters two and three. In 2001 the National Plan on Higher Education – NPHE, a follow-up policy document – was produced by the government with a view to enhancing the transformation agendas initiated by the White Paper 1997 and drawing attention to the importance of equipping all graduates with skills and qualities required for participation as citizens in a democracy (NPHE, 2001; Waghid, 2002:94). The NPHE produced six broad goals based on previous policy documents regarding higher education transformation. The national plan then further accentuates the importance of the transformation project that higher education is supposed to fulfil, and thereby become relevant to socio-economic imperatives of the country. The NPHE specifically targets skills development for democracy in the global context. For instance, with reference to economic concerns and the scarce skills imperative, the NPHE focused on changes in enrolment in terms of the field of study. This implied an emphasis on increased enrolment in the science, engineering and technology fields and a decrease of student numbers in the humanities, business and commerce fields (NPHE, 2001; Waghid, 2002:93). An equally important target of the NPHE is the enhancement of the cognitive skills of graduates required for participation as citizens in a democratic society and as workers and professionals in the knowledge economy (Waghid, 2002:93). Thus, in order to be socially and globally relevant, the NPHE made provisions for technical and cognitive skills that would enable graduates to function and be relevant in the competitive global context, while being informed by democratic principles.

The context in which UPFY was created was informed by an earlier transformation policy and the following-up of the NPHE. The various aspects of the programme, such as the profile of the manner in which students are taught and of the curriculum, reflect this context and the policy imperatives that were created by it. The environment in

which the UPFY was devised was also informed by debates on the relevance of higher education to the socio-economic needs of the society. This was illustrated in the position of Bawa (2000) in which he argues that against the background of the need to meet the demands of globalisation, South African higher education must create a social contract between the institutions and the public. Bawa suggests that the purpose of the contract would be to build the intellectual foundations of society by focusing on both graduate and undergraduate education, research, industrial partnerships, governance, effectiveness and efficiency. The aspect of the social contract that is of particular interest to this study and the UPFY is undergraduate education. According to Bawa,

> Undergraduate education has a vital role of building the foundations for the development of a broad-based indigenous intellectual culture, steeped in a critical democratic ethos. It is a function which, with the State, the higher education sector must maximally and actively widens access to increase participation. It must therefore ensure that it is delivered in the most cost effective ways (Bawa, 2000:7).

The undergraduate education referred to above represents the 18-24 age cohorts. The majority of the students at the UPFY fall into this group, the importance of which, Bawa asserts, lies in the foundations of national development. Some aspects of this social contract are also reflected in the NPHE, in particular, the broad goal of enhancing the cognitive skills of university graduates and of building democracy. The UPFY plays an important role in fulfilling some of the positions advanced in the NPHE and Bawa's social contract. Hence, even though it is small in scale, it plays an important part in fulfilling the political and economic role of higher education.

The overall objective of UPFY is to increase the quality and quantity of mathematics and science students at the University of Pretoria. The UPFY was designed to prepare students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the majority being black, for careers in science, mathematics and technology. The UPFY is an alternative to the historically standard pathway of progression from high school to university with matriculation exemption. The entrance requirements into the UPFY are lower than those of normal university programmes because the programme supplements and improves students' matriculation performance so that there is parity between a university entrance matriculation pass and the UPFY (De Beer & Golpalraj, 2005:1). The duration of the

course is one year: it is designed to allow progression into higher education mathematics and science fields as stipulated in the table below.

The UPFY students are required to write a selection test developed particularly to evaluate a student's propensity towards the subjects mentioned.

Table 5.1 − The UFPY programme

| Access courses at UPFY | Admission requirements as per science faculty | |
|---|---|---|
| Mathematics | Faculty | Admission requirements |
| Biology | Natural and Agricultural Sciences | UPFY pass |
| Chemistry | | |
| Physics | Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology | UPFY pass and a minimum of 65% in chemistry, physics and mathematics |
| English and Study Skills | | |
| Computer Literacy | Health Sciences and Dentistry | UPFY pass and propensity for the medical profession |

Source: (UPFY: www.up.ac.za/academic/upfy/programme. html. Accessed on 2/20/2005).

The table above shows the mathematics and science subjects offered at the UPFY and the mathematics and science requirements as per the science faculty. It illustrates the different faculties into which UPFY graduates feed on completion of the bridging course. An UPFY pass refers to a 60% pass in the basic mathematics and science subjects offered at the UPFY.

The UPFY as an access programme that exists in the current era of progressive teaching and learning methodologies displays certain elements of cooperative teaching and learning techniques. For instance, in a newsletter, the director of the centre expressed these by saying that:

> This is new physics; making science accessible to students who did not have the opportunity before, assisting teachers in developing deeper insights in the subject hand in hand with developing better teaching

methods, and sharing the intellectual joy with colleagues has been the leitmotiv throughout my career (UPFY Director, 2005).

The UPFY Programme attempts to correct the teaching and learning deficiencies of apartheid education by using progressive teaching and learning methods which attempt to address the needs of the students as a whole — fostering holistic development while attempting to develop the student's positive self-esteem (UPFY Programme, 2005:3). The assessment and teaching methods are student centred and practical, and relate to the student's daily life. The assessment practices are based on Outcomes Based Education and are informed by current research on best practices in assessment (UPFY Programme, 2005:4). Other positive features are the small group/class size, about 25 in each group, the employment of mentoring sessions, career talks and the provision of accommodation by the university (4) (UPFY Programme, 2005:5).[2]

The nature of the UPFY Programme accomplishes some of the elements of student centred pedagogy at the academic level while also fulfilling the political and economic mandate of affirmative action that seeks to redress the imbalances of the past. The motive of the UPFY, to redress previous injustices, bears similarities with access programmes that seek to broaden the participation of the previously disadvantaged in Western countries (Bibbings, 2006:83). The aspects of affirmative action are contained in the admission policy that requires lower grades and the exclusive admission of black students – "positive discrimination" (Bibbings).

Another related positive attribute of the UPFY is evident in that it accomplishes goals of the transformation and redress agenda in the anti-elitism it signifies. At a glance UPFY can be seen to address elitism because it adds diversity to a historically conservative institution whose dominant culture was based on elitist principles of exclusion. The issue of access as an antidote for elitism in higher education has been researched in the South African context and found to possess positive attributes such as promoting social inclusion and diversity (Ntshoe, 2003:381).

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[2] UPFY students were initially provided with fully sponsored board and lodging at the university residences and were to be fully integrated into the social life of students at the university. But due to financial constraints some of them commute from neighbourhoods around Pretoria and surrounding black townships.

UPFY as an access programme can be viewed as a human rights project. Global research indicates that increased access to higher education has been informed by the human rights discourse (Bibbings, 2006:87). In South Africa, the present educational policy and legislative framework conveys the centrality of human rights standards and intentions by which institutions can inform their educational principles (Keet, 2002:30). This implies that UPFY fulfils the human rights mandate by extending the educational rights of the participants so that they are granted the opportunity to fully develop their potential.

## 5.5    Policy Implementation

This section presents the results of the study in three sections: key findings, the findings as they relate to each research question, and additional findings not anticipated in the original design. In many parts of this section, the researcher includes actual statements from the interviews with participants in order to illustrate significant themes or connections.

The main finding with reference to the theme of policy implementation is that UPFY plays a crucial role in fulfilling the access mandate of the state, particularly since it focuses on enhancing the disadvantaged student's skills in mathematics and science. Furthermore, the responses obtained from the interview data share a common feature, that of characterising UPFY as a redressing of the apartheid educational legacy. The interpretation below reflects the sentiments illustrating UPFY as an access and redress programme.

At management level, the director of UPFY argued that the project's aim is to redress apartheid and fulfil the access mandate of the government, particularly in the engineering, science and technology fields. This illustrates that the broader policy of increasing access to higher education is owned and supported by people at management level.

At implementation level, the statements of all the six facilitators were in harmony with the management sentiments. The main purpose of the UPFY, as indicated, is to address the needs of disadvantaged students by opening up access to the mathematics, science,

engineering and technology fields. The following digest of responses obtained from five of the facilitators is illustrative.

- UPFY mainstreams disadvantaged students into mathematics and science — Physics

- UPFY increases the number of blacks at UP: as regards access and success — Chemistry

- UPFY bridges the gap between schooling and varsity — Mathematics

- UPFY helps previously disadvantaged students — Biology

- UPFY empowers previously disadvantaged students — Life skills.

The above statements further reflect an understanding of radical social justice and social justice education (Hackman & Raucher, 2001). For example, inclusion as an element of such education is highlighted by the emphasis on opening up access to those that have been previously disadvantaged.

## 5.6    Role of Project Managers

This section reports on the analysis of the responses to the question, *"What is your role in the broader mission of UPFY?"* The question regarding the role of each facilitator or project manager revealed how each of them had personalised their contribution to the broader mandate of contributing to the access and success of students at UPFY. An examination of the vertical line or row of learning facilitation revealed that the word "teach" was the dominant action word used by most facilitators in describing what they do with reference to their respective subjects. This response made it appear as if the dominant mode of classroom interaction is the traditional instruction paradigm of teaching, as opposed to the learning paradigm that evidences elements of progressive teaching. It would have been of great concern if their responses had ended there.

However, a number of facilitators further qualified their teaching role with phrases such as, "teaching for understanding", "designing a bridging curriculum", "enhancing student's knowledge in mathematics and science", "making use of a constructivist approach to teaching and learning" and "encouraging critical reasoning in students".

There is little doubt that the participants consider themselves as teachers first and foremost, but of interest are the qualifications they ascribed to their teaching roles. The descriptive roles illustrate that their role is to help students learn – focusing on learning. These roles have characteristics similar to the OBE methodologies that have been adopted in the country since 2000 (Lubisi, 2000). With reference to the teaching methodologies used at UPFY, adopting a constructivist approach to learning and teaching was also prominent. This further resembles certain aspects of the OBE teaching and learning methodologies.

The facilitation of the student's involvement in academic development emerged as a role that is common to most facilitators. In this regard, they viewed themselves as mentors, role models in the "rare" field of mathematics and science whereby they guide the student on a path to success. In this role they provide motivation sessions as a means of empowering students for success in the field. They also facilitate the bursary application process so that those who do not enjoy financial support can obtain assistance from sponsors.

As a result of the three roles, the enhancement of the student's holistic development is clearly evident. The facilitators develop the cognitive, emotional and material needs of the students; hence, at UPFY, most learning facilitators are more than merely teachers; their role is extensive.

However, in their statements most of the facilitators did not make reference to their roles as intellectuals who are aiming at the goal of questioning the context of their teaching and transforming it. From the perspective of radical social justice, this is a crucial function because intellectuals have a dynamic role to play in this regard, in the process broadening democratic possibilities. What is missing is Giroux's position with regards to radical intellectuals:

> On the one hand, radical intellectuals earn a living within institutions that play a role in producing a dominant culture. On the other hand, radical intellectuals define their political terrain by offering students forms of oppositional discourse and critical social practice at odds with the hegemonic role of the university and the society which it supports (Giroux, 1988:151).

Giroux further develops the notion of radical and transformative intellectuals who may emerge from any social class, with the goals of resisting the suffocating knowledge and practices of capitalist conditions of oppression (Giroux, 1988: 152); therefore, in terms of the perspective of radical social justice, the roles of the facilitator are presented as being neutral and fulfilling the agenda of the hegemonic ruling class. In order for the state of affairs to be more conducive to radical social justice, there is a need for the re-education of facilitators in the dynamics of critical pedagogy and the role of transformative intellectuals**.**

However, some of the input of most of the facilitators regarding their role in the facilitation of learning reveals certain elements of social justice education, though to a limited extent. In their utterances, there are aspects of student-centred critical pedagogy (Hackman & Rauscher, 2000). They express a sense of putting the students first in the learning process and guiding them in the mathematics and science fields. In this regard, aspects of social justice education which are dominant and clearly evident are student-centredness and critical thinking. This illustrates that while the facilitators may possess some understanding of progressive teaching methods; this understanding does not go beyond student-centredness and critical thinking to include aspects such as an awareness of oppression and systems of power, and engaging with diversity and dispositions to transform oppression so as to promote a socially just world. Given this state of affairs, it would be of great benefit for the future if UPFY were to explore the possibilities of familiarising facilitators with other aspects of social justice education.

In spite of the above, not all facilitators are alike in adopting the indicated neutral or apolitical stance towards classroom experiences. Only one discerning voice reflected elements of resistance, and the political nature of classroom encounters and a university learning environment as a whole, by indicating that the UPFY course has been "buggered" for profit making (Mathematics Facilitator). Since most facilitators operate in a university context, by virtue of their being intellectuals, their role falls short of fulfilling the radical social justice agenda. Most of their utterances were silent with regards to the role of engaging and changing the lives of the students and the society in which they live. The position of critical pedagogy on this matter is that teachers and students should become the chief mechanism for social change and that this can only

take place when the subjective positions of students are taken seriously (Giroux, 1988:152).

## 5.7 Conceptualisation of Social Justice

Social justice as conceived by the participants from the UPFY reveals the complexity of the concept in theory and practice. However, points of commonality were displayed by them. These were concerned with social justice being fulfilled by the UPFY mandate to ensure access and the success of previously marginalised groups. The overall meaning attached to this process has to do with correcting the educational injustices of the past with respect to policies and practices. Succinctly, social justice could be viewed as "getting learning right".

According to the director, the UPFY focuses on addressing the access problem by:

> Admitting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Programme provides quality training with the best trained teachers in the best available facilities and resources. It is an ideal Programme addressing the needs of disadvantaged students (2004).

The director further added a critique of social justice. According to him, the concepts "disadvantaged and social justice" need to be re-assessed because the status of being disadvantaged has changed during the 14 years of democracy.

The conceptualisation of social justice by the five facilitators added an illustrative dimension that relates more to the practice of social justice and "getting learning right". These goals would involve "empowering students with a humane culture, empowering students through the enhancement of their knowledge, promoting diversity tolerance by making the University of Pretoria more culturally and demographically representative, and making transformation a real lived experience of everyone". Added to these responses was the mention of re-educating the whites about teaching black students, addressing white cultural dominance and dealing with the conservative Afrikaner culture. In facilitating the process of learning about other cultures, the UPFY could benefit by using the mechanism for creating a multicultural and social justice organisation suggested by Anner (2000). In this regard, a mechanism that would be

appropriate is to build personal relationships between members from different backgrounds.

The language and discourse of empowerment and transformation permeated most of the responses. According to the physics facilitator, social justice is complex to define and practise; upgrading the socio-economic status of the marginalised and turning their disadvantaged status into that of being advantaged could be viewed as social justice. In the educational arena, social justice would entail a re-education of the African child by broadening her/his knowledge of career choices and encouraging him/her to take up careers in rare fields such as mathematics and science (Physics Facilitator). This implies that social justice education promotes the demystification of science by making it popular and accessible to more students, particularly those from marginalised communities. This position is in line with the inclusive nature and broadened knowledge conception of social justice advanced by Odora-Hoppers (2001).

Related to the above, the Chemistry and the Life Skills facilitators expanded on the social and personal dimension of social justice. The chemistry facilitator used another educational and practical example of social justice in referring to building the confidence of African children: addressing their false inferiority complexes and enabling them to perceive that their worth is equal to that of any other student. Social justice would also entail educating black students with regards to diversity and survival skills on campus. The life skills facilitator views social justice as a process that would lead to inculcating the values of good citizenship in African children. Empowering African children and assisting them would also constitute social justice. While the personal and social dimensions mentioned above contained some relevant aspects such as empowerment and good citizenship, they fall short of the liberatory and emancipatory possibilities of radical social justice.

The mathematics facilitator provided an illustrative account of social justice relating to education transformation — promoting participatory and democratic curriculum planning:

> So it is pointless by saying that I transform my unit by including the majority of blacks, when the majority of that staff have no effect on the policy, no effect on the direction of the course (2005).

Although the mathematics facilitator mentioned the relevant elements of social justice, there were contradictions in his statement. This emerged in the mention of transformation being pointless because of the lack of decision making powers on the part of black staff and the difficulty in paying fees experienced by the UPFY students. His statements illustrate the manifestation of powerlessness as a face of oppression, in Young's (2002) terms. This implies that although the majority of staff at the UPFY are black graduates, they still lack decision making powers with regard to policy and financial issues and are therefore marginalised. Furthermore, this practice indicates the intentionally limited commitment to change. Instead, UPFY is more committed to the culture of compliance although the experiences of some of the staff members do not reflect any transformation. In terms of institutional cultures, the sentiments reveal Higgins' (n.d.) description of the institutional culture of higher education as being one of white dominance, as experienced by most blacks. What can be deduced from this is that the mathematics facilitator is situated in a contradictory position, with a disposition that is counter to the dominant white and Western culture.

According to this facilitator, social justice is reflected in the ethos and dynamics of the UP but requires further transformation and "letting go" of the apartheid past, particularly the practices that counteract social justice and promoting those that encourage it. According to him, qualities that foster it include:

- cultural recognition;

- uplifting the socio-economic status of the marginalised and disadvantaged;

- adopting ideas and practices of progressivism;

- teaching with compassion;

- democratic curriculum planning; and

- addressing the commercialisation of higher education.

The sentiments of the five facilitators reflect a variety of conceptions of social justice. Some strands of the conservative tradition are apparent in the emphasis on social justice as being redistributive of socio-economic benefits to the marginalised, while at the same time; certain elements of the radical conception of social justice are evident in the emphasis on democratic curriculum planning, adoption of progressive ideals and empowering the African child with principles of good citizenship. These ideals are similar to those of radical educators, such as Giroux's position that education should be for the public good informed by principles of democracy and social justice (Giroux, 2004). Subsequently, it can be inferred that the facilitators at the UPFY are a mixed group who evidence sentiments of progressive social justice, even though this is in its infancy here. Hence, in order for this form of justice to be nurtured, much work is required in this regard.

## 5.8 Intended Outcomes of the UPFY

The general responses of the participants to the question on the outcomes of the UPFY further reflect the broad policy intentions, noted earlier, of increasing access and the success of previously marginalised groups in the mathematics and science fields. Some of the responses relate the outcomes to macro issues such as contributing to the socio-economic development of the country and the promotion of South Africa's self-reliance in certain scarce skills.

The responses further revealed the broad nature of the programme, in the mention of cultural transformation and the equal ownership of the University of Pretoria by all stakeholders, the adoption of an inclusive culture, the promotion of openness and transparency. Such outcomes were identified by progressive facilitators who identified with the constructivist approach to teaching and learning. At the micro and programme levels, the responses indicated that the educational outcomes include the enhancement of students' study skills, and knowledge in the four fields mentioned. Once the student's knowledge is enriched so as to facilitate her/his success at the university, most participants indicated the following as part of the long-term outcomes of the programme:

- increased numbers of black mathematics and science graduates;

- mainstreaming disadvantaged students in the field of mathematics and science; and

- the enhancement of cultural transformation.

The overall image presented regarding the outcomes of the UPFY ensures positive solutions to the past and current situation of a deficient education system. The intentions of the project, according to the facilitators, are to rise to the scarce skills challenge as revealed by South African research (Woodlard, Kneebone and Lee, 2003). In addition, certain political outcomes are linked to the transformation agenda of higher education in South Africa, for instance, the intention to be accommodative and inclusive of all cultural groups, even the minority cultures. Although this is mentioned in passing, it is a project that the UPFY needs to pursue in future so that it avoids being stigmatised as a "black only" project. In terms of radical social justice, the UPFY as such a project would become a problem because it perpetuates positive discrimination, appears exclusionist and therefore runs counter to certain of the concepts of inclusion. Some of the outcomes of the UPFY stand the chance of perpetuating affirmative action — a new form of apartheid. In terms of the radical position of social justice, this is problematic because any developmental and empowerment initiative needs to target everyone.

## 5.9 Research

Research as an important function of all the facilitators of the UPFY did not emerge as a concern in the interviews with the majority of them. However, the physics facilitator communicated the following research passion:

- Performance of children in science and technology in the SADC region;

- Demystification of science;

- Simplification of complex concepts in science;

- Teaching physics from the African perspective;

- Making science accessible to African children; and

- Challenging the bias towards social science and humanities in Africa.

The position of the said facilitator with regards to research is broad and focused on the African and Southern African context – that in which the University of Pretoria operates. An important point that he raises is the demystification of science and making it more accessible to African students. This position addresses the commonly held position, influenced by Bantu Education, that mathematics and science are not good for African students.

Addressing the bias towards natural sciences versus the human sciences presents a further important concern which is international in nature. On this issue, radical scholars such as Giroux raise the important issue that the humanities in higher education are being eroded by the emphasis on sciences and business and management sciences (Giroux, 2006). This trend has contributed to the production of higher education graduates that are out of touch with the common good of higher education with reference to democracy and good citizenship.

At the time of the interview, one facilitator indicated that there was no tracer study of the UPFY students once they have entered the mainstream. This is one research area on which the programme could focus.

The research agenda that emerges from the UPFY data indicates that there is great potential for the UPFY to make a meaningful contribution to the field of inclusive education and indigenous knowledge systems as an aspect of social justice (Odora-Hoppers, 2001), a field that the UPFY could latch on to in order to be socially relevant to the South African society. The sentiments of the physics facilitator also reflect the positions of other researchers with regards to research in higher education in a transformed context. For example, Waghid states that:

> Transformation in higher education involves a process of new knowledge production, reflexive action, which means seeing new problems and imagining new ways of approaching old problems, and deconstruction or reconstruction or constant exploration beneath surface appearance "to respond to a future that cannot be imagined" (Waghid, 2002:459).

What is evident in the above quotation is a broad research agenda that seeks to address new ways of doing things. In this context, there is room for unlimited exploration and discovery of diverse research topics such as inclusive education and social justice education.

## 5.10  Challenges

The data point to inadequate financial resources as the most overwhelming challenge, which inhibits the full implementation of the UPFY access programme. Financial inadequacies manifest themselves as poverty at the societal level. For example, the poverty stricken background of students was frequently mentioned as a major problem. At the institutional level, the centre is also experiencing financial difficulties. The centre attempts to address these financial issues by assisting students to acquire sponsorship; but sponsors are hard to come by.

A further challenge was related to the management of the University of Pretoria: This was identified as a lack of proper vision and the misinterpretation of employment equity.

> … if they continue to disguise empowerment by continuing to employ more white women, which fits employment affirmative action criteria and say this is our actual employment figures this year… But also when you look at the staff that we have now, we have 32% of black staff. Is that staff happy? Do they feel part of this University; do they feel welcomed in this university? And by and large the wealth and the resource that it has, the real property is not the buildings, it is the intellectual property that it has. It is the people that it has and it is the staff members, and if the staff is unhappy, the productivity will be negative. So these are the challenges, the challenges of the people who do not want to change which means the university will not change (Mathematics Facilitator, 2005).

It can be deduced from the above quote that most black staff at the UPFY are generally not happy with the pace of transformation and the implementation of polices such as the Employment Equity policies. They experience the negative impact of an organisational culture that is hostile to transformation and to fully correcting the injustices of the past. As valuable assets and intellectuals they perceive the proclaimed change as non-change. The sentiments in the quote also reflect their view that the institutional culture of

universities in South Africa mirrors white dominance and the concomitant lack of power that blacks possess to change the state of affairs.

Their experiences further reflect the issue of the mismatch between policy outcomes and expectations: that is, among the outcomes of the transformation policy are pockets of resistance to change and ethnocentricity which clash with the expectations of a united democratic rainbow nation. This scenario is manifest in a number of settings in the country.

The common educational challenges mentioned were the lack of preparedness of learners for tertiary education by the schooling system. This problem, according to most of the facilitators, manifests itself in other challenges such as the students' inadequate background in mathematics and science, lack of exposure to the field and very low academic literacy. As far as the director of the centre is concerned, the challenges that face the UPFY, in this regard, can be classified in terms of financial need, English proficiency, and family issues. All these factors affect the skills that are needed by students in order to cope with the tertiary learning environment.

The cultural integration challenge also emerged as a significant factor. This was to be expected, given the fact that the UPFY is a programme in a historically conservative white institution which evidences traces of segregationist ideology as opposed to that of "multiculturalism" or the "melting pot" metaphor. This challenge is evident in the persistent culture of white entitlement, resistance to change and the marginalisation of black staff members from policy making.

In other words, although the UPFY is attempting to be a microcosm of a transformed democratic society, the "rainbow-nisation" process continues to meet with major problems. The experiences of most of the facilitators, especially those who are black, indicate that white conservative Afrikaners still wish to maintain the core and dominance of their culture.

The challenges that the UPFY faces as it implements the access and success mandate of the government are manifold and interrelated. These illustrate the magnitude of the

socio-economic injustices that continue to plague the marginalised and disadvantaged communities, even fourteen years after the start of the democratic dispensation. At the educational level, the challenges seriously compromise the teaching and learning culture and are most likely to compromise the access and success mandate.

In further explaining the challenges that the UPFY faces, it is useful to employ McLaughlin's (1998) concept of an implementation problem, which refers to a situation where policies are not being implemented as planned (McLaughlin, 1998:81). In the case of the UPFY, for instance, the original plan was to offer full sponsorship for all the students, but as time passed, this became a problem: full sponsorship could not be sustained. Once again, the financial commitment of the university towards redress is placed under question. It also illustrates another important development in higher education (see chapter four) regarding the impact of market logic or the commodification of higher education services (Apple, 2005). It appears that the university has been affected by this to such an extent that it has lost touch with the needs of the students from poverty stricken backgrounds. This could explain the dwindling financial contribution of the university management to the UPFY programme.

## 5.11  Addressing Challenges

> Policy outcomes are far from matching educational expectations, mainly because of insufficient or no implementation. The reason most education policies are not implemented is that they are vaguely stated and the financing implications are not always worked out (Psacharopoulos, 1989).

The above statement was made 20 years ago and it still applies today even in the case of the UPFY. As has been indicated, the main challenges regarding the full implementation of the UPFY are financial. Therefore, making a strong financial commitment to the programme would contribute to its smooth and full implementation. This solution was included in the responses of most of the participants.

Educational reform policies in South Africa have been dominated by attempts to meet a high level of needs for "person power" and to employ the discourse of transformation to

fulfil the other needs of the new democracy. At institutional level, these reform efforts as reflected in various projects, like the UPFY, encountered various challenges that exerted a negative impact on their full implementation.

In addressing these challenges various solutions have been suggested by the facilitators. Most of the solutions are on the lines of reinforcing the UPFY mission so that it continues to fulfil its mandate of providing access to the previously disadvantaged students in the given fields.

Since respondents identified the issue that the lack of financial resources presents the greatest challenges, obtaining finance for all the UPFY activities, particularly student bursaries, was suggested as a solution. The main strategies of the director are to acquire funds to address these critical financial needs. Since UPFY is an access programme that is a response to the national mandate to increase access as a social justice imperative, the director argues that there is a need to re-conceptualise both access and social justice since the terms are not clearly defined. According to him, it is through their clear conceptualisation that the programme will be able to meet its outcomes.

It was suggested that the solution to the educational and pedagogical challenges lies in the development of the curriculum and the student as regards academic skills. With reference to curriculum concerns, two aspects emerged, firstly the design of a proper curriculum that is contextualised and is able to increase the student's knowledge quantitatively and qualitatively. Secondly, another interesting point that emerged in connection with the curriculum was that it needs to be informed by the African perspective. The reformed mode of delivering the curriculum emerged as an important solution. In this regard, most of the facilitators suggested that adopting progressive educational strategies on a broader scale would enable students to learn much more. Also of note is the mention of the deployment of constructivist learning theory.

With reference to the academic development of students, most facilitators felt that this programme needs to be reinforced so as to treat the students holistically and to provide the following services:

- Career guidance;

- Aptitude testing;

- Empowerment and motivational programmes;

- HIV AIDS counselling;

- Drug counselling;

- Preparation for the world of work and the world of self-employment; and

- Engaging in research on the performance of African children in mathematics and science.

The above activities are in place at the UPFY and form part and parcel of its normal operations. However, since they have been highlighted they need to be reinforced and a task force assigned so that they can receive proper attention.

The challenges listed by the UPFY staff reflect the broader issues of implementing social justice in a context that is employing a conservative form of social justice. Since the institution as a whole is a neo-conservative liberal university it could be inferred that the conception of social justice dominant at the UP is one that is liberal and reformist. This view does not advocate the transformation of the capitalist status quo as the radical conception does; therefore, perceiving it through a liberal lens, the UPFY is an exemplary project, par excellence. But in terms of a radical social justice perspective, the UPFY still needs to address other challenges such as re-educating the African child about the social relevance of mathematics and science and their role in contributing to a socially just world in a more holistic manner.

## 5.12 The Uniqueness of the UPFY – Other Emergent Factors

The director of the UPFY stressed that contrary to the common experiences of other centres and programmes on campus, the UPFY is not marginalised. The programme enjoys full management support and is fully integrated into the faculty of science. The success factor of the UPFY during its short experience has been to produce students that are on a par with mainstream students. However, despite the positive attributes above,

the problems of financial needs of the UPFY students remain both consistent and persistent.

## 5.13 Critical Appraisal of the UPFY

The problems of the UPFY will be treated according to the critical tradition that informs this study. When it is viewed through the lens of the critical theory tradition, a number of contradictions and gaps are apparent in the programme, for example, the danger of stigmatisation, and the mathematics and science bias.

In terms of the philosophy and logic that informs the UPFY as regards the redressing of apartheid educational injustices, there is evidence of certain elements of social justice education as theorised in the current research. For instance, the programme employs individualised instruction responsive to the needs and problems of the student and follows a holistic and inter-disciplinary approach to the curriculum (De Beer & Golpalraj, 2005:1). Individualised instruction is used in conjunction with a student centred approach together with certain aspects of dialogue. These two strategies reflect the sentiment of social justice discussed above (Hackman & Rauscher, 2000). However, the use of progressive education techniques does not entail other aspects such as a critical analysis of systems of oppression and power and the ability of students to act as change agents (Hackman & Rauscher). This implies that students at the UPFY need to be provided with contextualised information that critically engages the dynamics of capitalism and neo-liberalism so as to create better solutions to current problems. For instance, an awareness of how societal, economic, moral and religious values suppress many groups so as to maintain the status quo of the privilege of the advantaged groups, as compared to the disadvantaged groups, constitutes one element of combating the systems of oppression. This would go a long way towards empowering students to question even the very existence of the UPFY. Although there are some pockets of social justice in the UPFY, in order to promote genuine social justice education, it would be advantageous for the programme to explore the possibility of broadening its mandate to include contextualised information with regards to the political economy of capitalism and neo-liberalism and the quest for alternatives to the status quo.

The UPFY project is a microcosm of the wider South African higher education scenario. By addressing the access mandate, the UPFY erects the broad transformation pillar, increased and broadened participation, which is crucial for the relevance of higher education to societal needs. However, the UPFY could also make practical contributions to the enhancement of transformation and to creating an educational institution informed by social justice by adopting some of the mechanisms required to build a successful multicultural and socially just organisation: such as encouraging relationships between members from different groups, fostering social justice activism together with community organisations and confronting white privilege and nationalism (Anner, 2000:494). While the mechanisms stem from a western and American context, it is useful for the UPFY to adapt some of its provisions because they are relevant to addressing the conservative organisational culture of the University of Pretoria that perpetuates marginality, and exclusion from power, of people from disadvantaged communities. In brief, the mechanisms suggest that the university needs some form of re-education to learn about dealing with introducing an organisational culture that is conducive to social justice and inclusion. In this regard, undergoing the process of re-culturing, as suggested by Fullan (1998), would also go a long way towards building a campus climate conducive for the promotion of social justice.

Furthermore, in terms of critical theory and pedagogy, the intellectuals, activists and facilitators at the UPFY need to be explicit about their role if they perceive it as liberating the consciousness and learning of the student, the curriculum, research and all other activities performed by the UPFY. They need to broaden their activity to the wider university context so as to address instances of white dominance in an institutional culture. There must be a critique of this in most of their activities, as well as a critical questioning of the context of their teaching and learning and the extent to which the status quo is liberatory or confirmatory. What has emerged from the data analysis is the limited critique of the context of the university. By critique, the study does not imply the encouragement of a culture of complaint, but the interrogation of dominant practices, hidden and obvious, that threaten to undermine genuine inclusion and the agenda of radical social justice.

## 5.14 Conclusion

The UPFY Programme is informed by the transformation agenda that advances non-sexism, non-racism, integration and inclusion. By admitting exclusively black students, the UPFY is perpetuating segregation on racial grounds. For this reason, it is in danger of being stigmatised because it is associated with a population group that is perceived as experiencing deficiencies and needing remediation. Instead of being perceived as a developmental programme with a long term impact, it might be viewed as a remedial programme that only exerts a short term impact. Furthermore, there is also the related problem of negative labels accorded to the UPFY candidates that might lead to the programme being a breeding ground for racism, social intolerance, and an extremist culture. Consequently, in the long run, owing to stigmatisation, the UPFY may actually exacerbate the access problem it originally sought to alleviate.

Although the UPFY was created or set up to deal with the problem of scarcity of skills in the natural sciences, a goal which it is fulfilling, the curriculum of the programme communicates a bias towards the natural sciences at the expense of other skills that are essential for the youth to make a meaningful contribution to democracy. The scale and focus of the UPFY Programme are also problematic. A significant difficulty is that it is not an institution-wide programme but can be described as a minimalist model designed and confined to the faculty of natural sciences.

The UPFY can be seen as an access programme that is driven by a mixture of philosophical rationales, from progressive social justice education to economic imperatives and development of skills in science, engineering and technology. These rationales inform the educational institutions of most countries, particularly in the global context where there is a growing need for skills in the said fields. At face value, the programme can also be said to be fulfilling utilitarian needs because it specifically contributes to the production of graduates in mathematics, science and engineering and technology, areas that are earmarked by the market and industry as being important and of value only to the human capital market.

The crucial question to ask is whether the UPFY's rationale is one of social justice and of dealing with the nature of the challenges faced in advancing it. It has been shown

above that the responses reveal that the UPFY has potential for fulfilling the mandate of some elements of social justice. The chapter that follow focused on the case of IGWS and social justice.

**CHAPTER 6 − IGWS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

"In theory women's position in society has been greatly improved – in reality this does not seem to be happening" (Sharita Samuel, 2001).

## 6.1 Introduction

The central question addressed in this chapter is whether the IGWS fulfils the higher education transformation mandate of fostering social justice through the promotion of gender equality. It is my contention that such equality in South Africa can become socially relevant if guided by radical social policies which promote gender justice. It is also my contention that gender equality, if framed in the language of radical social justice, boasts extremely impressive credentials for promoting human beings from circumstances that enslave them – those of domination and oppression. Its emphasis on human beings as self-creating producers of their own history is remarkable. This point will be argued by locating gender within the broader global developments leading to gender mainstreaming. This is done so as to provide a conceptualisation of gender equality and its links with radical social justice. A consideration of the role of IGWS will be provided to illustrate an appropriate setting and context. This will be followed by a report on the analysis of data that seeks to address the central research question.

## 6.2 Gender Equality in the Global Debate

The quest for gender equity has been one of the leading priorities on the agenda of nation states and international organizations such as the United Nations during the 20th and 21st centuries. In this search, gender equality activists and feminist scholars have also played a crucial role in trying to advance gender equality and transformation of institutions at national and international level − particularly regarding processes of marginalisation and exclusion. Informed by the human rights culture and the dominant egalitarian and liberal ideologies, most nation states adopted the United Nations' internationally agreed strategies, standards, programmes and goals to advance the equal status of women and women worldwide (CEDAW 2003:3). The specific examples are found in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1967 and 1979, the United Nations Women's Decade 1976-1985

and the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995. Social researchers and feminist theorists were also influenced by the United Nations in promoting gender equity, as is evident in the feminist and social theorists' increasing interest in the need to overcome gender based injustices. Research indicates that the quest for gender equality was advanced by various feminist theorists, ranging from liberal to post-modernist. Each of these theories enhanced the understanding of the search for gender equality and made a major contribution to the nation state in promoting equality of this sort (Connelly, 2000; IGWS, 2004; Mannathoko 1999). The uniting concern of most feminist theorists is the promotion of women's equality. They differ only in their strategies regarding how to do so.

The dominant feminist theory which was one of the forerunners of the gender equality movement is that of liberal feminism, which emphasised the equal opportunity of women before the law. It is informed by liberal political theory which is grounded in the twin principles of universal and human rights guaranteed by the rule of law (Molyneaux, 2000:11). "For liberal feminism, the ideal gender arrangement has tended to be the one in which an individual acting as a free and moral agent chooses the lifestyle most suitable for him or her… Liberal feminism has always had a reformist orientation (IGWS, 2004:25; Connelly, 2000:41) In most nation states, this position has been utilised as a framework for creating machinery and government departments that promote gender equality within the capitalist socio-economic system (Connelly, 2000: 42). For instance, liberal feminists were in the forefront in creating Women in Development – WID (Connelly).

## 6.3   The Women in Development Agenda – WID

The Women in Development movement (WID) was popular in the 1960s and was informed by the liberal modernisation paradigm which advocated individual rights, freedom of choice, and equality of opportunities for men and women (Gordon, 1996:13). Its main purpose was to reform the position of women by promoting equal opportunities for them in all aspects of the socio-economic and political arena, thus elevating them from the margins to the mainstream of policy (Razavi & Miller, 1995:1) At its height, in the 1970s, the WID movement sought simply to insert women's issues into economic and agricultural development by initiating special projects that focused

on women (True, 2003:370: El-Bushra 2000:55). This agenda also exerted an impact on Africa and the developing world, as evident in liberal socio-economic reforms that attempted to emulate the Western characteristics of the liberal modernisation paradigm (Connelly, 2000: 33). The WID accepted capitalism as a panacea for redressing women's inequality without questioning it. A number of criticisms were levelled against its agenda. For instance, social researchers from Africa criticised it for not adequately accommodating the African context where pre-capitalist formations existed that were not promoting women and development. Socialist feminists critiqued it for contributing to the perpetuation of a cheap labour force in its uncritical acceptance of capitalism (Gordon, 1996:14). Kabeer critiques the WID agenda as pragmatic, non-ideological and pro the capitalist status quo (Kabeer, 1994: 12). WID has also been faulted for being influenced by the modernisation paradigm which does not apply to all contexts, and for being limited to the economic level and not the social aspects of inequality (Parpart, Connelly, and Barriteau 2000:57; Mannathoko, 1999:450).

Due to the limitations of the liberal feminist position, some feminists sought answers for a more nuanced theory of women's development in Marxism, because it had developed a thorough critique of liberalism and capitalism. The primary Marxist position on women and gender inequalities was that these were due to capitalist forms of domination, so that the removal of oppression and domination and the establishment of gender equality would be achieved on the demise of the capitalist system (Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau, 2000:45). However, this approach did not fully address the concerns of women since it regarded the elimination of capitalism as a prerequisite for their liberation. This dissatisfaction with both the liberal and Marxist strands of feminism led to the emergence of radical feminism, which argued that patriarchal domination was the process that had hindered women from development and therefore suggested separate projects for women, thus protecting them from being integrated into the patriarchal world. The extreme radical position was not popular even though it continued to operate in a context in which WID was losing ground, due to its reformist nature.

## 6.4　The Women and Development – WAD Agenda

The emergence of the Women and Development school of thought was due to the inadequacies of the WID agenda. It was initiated by radical feminist disillusionment with the latter and stemmed from the position of Marxist feminists who insisted that the emancipation of women needed to be preceded by the elimination of the capitalist system and the introduction of socialism (Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau, 2000:59). WAD stressed the distinctiveness of women's knowledge, work goals and responsibilities (Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau 2000: 60). However, WAD was marginalised and did not display much transformative potential due to its smallness in scale and its exclusion of men. It has also been criticised for its inability to challenge the male dominated power structures.

The agendas of WID and WAD have also been faulted by other feminists for being inadequate, particularly in meeting the needs of African and third world women. The WID agenda has been censured for being compatible with liberal capitalism that expresses the sentiments of white western middle class women. It fails to address third world women's economic exploitation through imperialism, racism and poverty (Gordon, 1996:78- 79).

The WAD agenda has been criticised for leaving men out of the development process. Consequently, scholars who advocate African development argue that for genuine gender equality in the third world and Africa, there must be diversity within feminism in order to respond to different women's needs (Gordon, 1996:78- 79). This implies that in the third world, there is a need for a variety of feminist schools of thought ranging from liberal to radical feminism. Such scholars argue that, for African women, gender equality alone is not enough: "Women need justice not only at the household level, but also in the local, national and world economic order… Feminism for the Third world women involves not only women's equal participation in society but a movement for social justice that is inclusive of the entire community and addresses the racism, economic exploitation and imperialism …" (Johnson-Odim, 1991, cited in Gordon, 1996:79).

## 6.5 Gender and Development – GAD

Research has demonstrated that during the 1980s political and economic conservatism dominated Western government and donor agencies, which resulted in high debt and increased poverty and gender inequality (Walby, 2000:21), owing to the inadequacies of modernisation as a development paradigm that informed gender equality. The projects of gender equality that had been initiated by the WID and the WAD did not alleviate women's inequality; this led to some feminist and development theorists losing confidence in the two approaches. In turn this lack of faith led to the emergence of the Gender and Development agendas: GAD. This framework is referred to as the empowerment approach. It was founded by an organisation called Development Alternatives with Women in a New Era – DAWN – in 1985. GAD was the brainchild of third world feminists who focused on gender empowerment on the local and global arena (Parpart and Connelly, 2000: 62), but the Gender and Development paradigm was more transformative because it sought to incorporate the gender perspective and to transform the broader socio-and institutional context so as to promote gender justice (True, 2003:370). GAD focused on patriarchal domination and the social construction of gender. Its agenda was broad and holistic in that it focused on the interconnectedness of class, race and gender (True, 2003:370).

In addition to the influence of third world feminism, the GAD approach was also heavily influenced by the experiences of Western socialist feminists. The latter's main argument is that class subordination and the patriarchal system are of equal importance and need to be challenged at the same time (Connelly, 2000:50). The socialist feminists do not isolate gender oppression from political-economic and patriarchal domination in explaining the position of women (IGWS, 2004: 30). Informed by both radical and socialist feminisms, "GAD adopts a two-pronged approach to the study of women and development, investigating women's material conditions and class position, as well as the patriarchal structures and ideas that define and maintain women's subordination." (Connelly, 2000:33)

However, GAD suffers from certain limitations in the sense that it does not engage fully with gender equality on a global scale (True, 2003:370). Because the GAD strategy was informed by socialist feminism, it can be said that other socialist feminists called for

global feminism, in particular Young and "the five faces of oppression". Young's position is a more comprehensive analysis of women's oppression across the globe and applies to most contexts – in the west and in the south. Young calls for the elimination of all forms of oppression in order to achieve true gender justice on a global scale.

In South Africa, the struggle for women's equality and emancipation was more pronounced in the ANC liberation movement than other circles. South African women were also experiencing similar injustices to those of other women from the rest of the world but their case was unique because of the apartheid regime. According to Bozzoli, "…all women suffered from some form of discrimination on the basis of sex. Black women carry the burden of a triple oppression of race, class and gender" (Bozzoli, 1983:139). For the emancipation of women, the ANC in the 1990 advanced the view that "experiences of other societies have shown us that the emancipation of women is not a by product of the struggle for democracy, national liberation and socialism. It has to be addressed in its own right within our organisations, the mass democratic movement and in our society as a whole" (ANC, 1990).

In South Africa, the feminist discourse that played a large role in formulating the agendas of the WID, WAD and GAD was initially treated with suspicion, particularly by some black progressives, because they perceived it as a white, middle class bourgeois import offering very little hope for black women (Karamarae & Spencer, 2000:230). Another factor that contributed to the downplaying of feminist discourse was the fact that owing to the urgency of the liberation movement, inequalities in terms of gender were obscured (Karamarae & Spencer, 2000:239). However, the ANC continued to promote gender equality as important.

## 6.6 Gender Mainstreaming

The end of the 20th century and the dawn of the 21st century ushered in new socio-economic dynamics in the process of globalisation that led to the re-emergence of the gender mainstreaming agenda. The concepts take their origins from international texts of the United Nations Third International Conference on women in 1985, when the debate on women in the role of development was discussed. It was adopted during the United Nations Fourth International Conference on women in 1995 as the Beijing

Platform for Action. Currently, gender mainstreaming is the main strategy used for achieving gender equality nationally and globally (Moser & Moser, 2005:11). In this strategy, there are strands of both the dominant paradigms of WID and GAD, particularly in the focus on gender equality. Gender mainstreaming does not aim at replacing the existing policies that were informed by the WID and GAD agenda but aims to complement them. It operates hand in hand with other policies to reach the goal of gender equality (The Council of Europe, 2003:2). The most widely used definition of gender mainstreaming is that of The Council of Europe: "gender mainstreaming is the (re) organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that gender equality perspective is incorporated in all polices at all levels at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making" (The Council of Europe, 2003:2): a process of productive engagement.

The gender mainstreaming paradigm attempts to promote gender justice by establishing a gender equality perspective across all areas of policy. According to True:

> …it is a strategy to reinvent the process of policy design; implementation and evaluation by taking into account the gender specific and often diverse interests and values of differently situated women and men. Every policy or piece of legislation should be evaluated from the perspective of whether or not it reduces or increases gender inequalities (True, 2003:371).

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy was adopted and used to inform policies of international organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union and national governments such as that of the newly democratic South Africa (Woodward, 2001:7; CDE, 2004).

Gender mainstreaming is also perceived as a new form of political practice and theory. It chimes with the gender equality project of feminist discourses owing to its progressiveness. According to Walby, "gender mainstreaming is a new development in feminist practice that seeks to normalize policies for gender equality… it is also a feminist strategy that draws on and can inform feminist theory" (Walby, 2005:466). Its novelty lies in its focus on transnational and global processes and transformations of the discourse of universal human rights (Walby, 2005:453). According to Walby, "it is

situated within the development of transnational global politics, of multilateral forms of governance such as the United Nations and trans-national polity of the European Union, as well as the development of a diverse global discourse of human rights that transcend country boundaries, each of which have disparate outcomes when in articulation with country differences" (2005: 339). Even progressive African feminists identify with the sentiments of gender equality and mainstreaming projects, particularly in their critique of neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism and globalisation (Riandriamaro, 2003:44 and Tripp, 2003:233).

Gender mainstreaming is an essentially progressive norm, but it is contested in theory and practice due to its enormous scale (Hannan, 2000, cited in Woodward, 2001:7; Perrons, 2005:390; Walby, 2005:321; Gottfried & Reese, 2003:3). However, its impressive credentials are limited because research shows that there have been challenges such as inconsistency in implementation and lack of consensus as regards assessing the impact of gender mainstreaming (Moser, & Moser, 2005:11). Hence there is a great need for research evaluating such an impact.

The attractiveness of gender mainstreaming inheres in its holistic approach to gender equality: in proposing to introduce a gender equality perspective to all policies at all levels of governance. This does not signify that the targeted gender equality policies and state mechanisms for delivering them are to disappear, but it does mean that an overarching gender mainstreaming strategy is intended to complement domestic policy approaches to gender equality that are in place. Hence the significant role that independent and autonomous woman and gender studies programmes play in promoting gender mainstreaming, as will be shown in the sections that follow.

## 6.7    Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in South Africa

The approach that South African policy makers have adopted with reference to gender mainstreaming is based on the South African Constitution. In South Africa, mainstreaming initiatives have sought to create a focal point for gender in the form of the Commission for Gender Equality: CGE. The mandate of the CGE is based on the constitution and its brief is to promote gender equality.

The functions of the Commission are to:

- Monitor all organs of society to ensure that gender equity is safeguarded and promoted;

- Assess all legislation from a gender perspective;

- Commission research and make recommendations to parliament and other authorities;

- Educate and inform the public;

- Investigate complaints on gender-related issues;

- Monitor South Africans' progress towards gender equality in relation to international norms.

(Commission for Gender Equality 2006:1)

The establishment of the Commission offers an indication that South Africa is concerned about and committed to promoting gender equality. Established in 1997, the CGE was timely, following the 1995 UN Beijing conference on women. The CGE sought to highlight the importance of mainstreaming or integrating gender equality in all spheres of society. In South Africa it has integrated mainstreaming policies and strategies into all sectors of the economy and continues to oversee the compliance of all sectors with this policy imperative.

The following analysis is illustrative of the contribution that the adoption of the gender mainstreaming paradigm has recently made to South African society:

> Ten years after democracy in South Africa, it is possible to point to significant strides that have been made socially, economically and politically in terms of gender equity. The constitution, the Bill of Rights, legislation in all departments and use of quotas as a mechanism to improve gender inclusivity reflect the commitment to gender equality and non-sexism in government and civil society organizations (Chisholm & September, 2004:1).

Gender mainstreaming in South African education also gained its momentum after the adoption of the 1995 Beijing platform of action. In the same year the Ministry of Education appointed a Gender Equity Task Team: GETT. Its main aim was to advise the government with respect to the establishment of a permanent gender equity unit. The results of the recommendations of GETT led to the Ministry of Education adopting three principles that advanced gender equity:

- Mainstreaming gender;

- Capacity building for gender equity implementation;

- Reduction of gender based violence and harassment in education (Pandor, 2004: 10).

The concerted attention given to gender equality in the education arena indicates the heightened visibility of women's issues in general as well as the promotion of the human capital discourse and its philosophy of investment in education as a key to socio-economic development. Furthermore, it demonstrates that concerns with gender equality are (by now) well-charted territory because these do not end at national (state) level but trickle down to all state departments, and, with reference to education, also to all institutions of learning and other educational stakeholders such as community organisations. This is particularly pertinent at tertiary level, since these institutions contribute to women's quantitative and qualitative participation as part of building human capital.

As a result of the new democratic dispensation in South Africa, the state has adopted a comprehensive reform of social policy with reference to gender, informed by the principles of democracy, human dignity, political, economic and social justice. This prompted a variety of progressive scholars to devote their attention to analyzing and explaining the extent to which government social policies are promoting the transformation agenda of the democratic dispensation in general and the gender equity agenda in particular. This impetus came from varying scholars locally and globally whose sentiments identified with the anti-apartheid and the feminist movements (Siedman, 1999:289). Social research reveals both the contributions and contradictions

which the state and feminist driven gender equity and mainstreaming agenda have produced. The positive aspects are evident in a number of theoretical and concrete developments. According to Siedman, South African feminist activists constructed a broad picture of women's interests, informed by their participation in the grassroots and mass democratic movement and the discourse of international feminism (Siedman, 1999: 290). In similar vein, Meer asserted that South African women used the non-sexist stance of the liberation struggle era to ensure that gender equity was enshrined in the constitution and promoted gender mainstreaming in the new state (Meer, 2005:44). This sentiment towards gender equality indicated that South Africa is embracing a more holistic view of women's issues.

The positive fruits of promoting gender equality are even seen as inspirational and exemplary for other countries.

> South Africa is a stellar example of what women can achieve during a democratic transition. South Africa's dramatic and impressive achievements have been an inspiration to activists and feminist scholars… New to parliament, they nevertheless accomplished much: the government approved the highest of international women's rights standards available, women's constitutional equality and reproductive rights were enhanced, new attention was paid to gender equality in the economy, and new institutional forums were established to ensure government accountability on gender issues (Walsh, 2006: 85).

Hence the gender equity and mainstreaming paradigm resulted in women's voices and influence having an impact at the highest levels of government, thus championing the fight for gender justice.

Another positive aspect is the contribution made by a vibrant South African feminist movement, as evident in the publication of the feminist journal *Agenda*.

> *Agenda* has always attempted, through the copy, to contribute towards the development of a South African feminism. In the early years, reacting against the perception that feminism was only relevant to white western and middle class women the first 10 issues were deliberately focused on the socio-political and economic reality of being a black woman in South Africa. The copy was selected to demonstrate that all aspects of life were influenced by gender (in relation to other social

dynamics) and not only those traditionally identified as "women issues" such as contraception, abortion and rape, domestic violence and sexuality (Friedman, 2004:11).

*Agenda's* focus in promoting South African feminism is evidenced by the calibre and intellectual status of its contributors. For instance, Professor Amina Mama, one of Africa's leading contemporary feminist activist scholars, views engagement with gender mainstreaming as a tool that empowers women to stop intellectual and epistemic violence against women (Mama, 2001: 63).

The presence of a vibrant critical feminist discourse and publications such as *Agenda* created an environment for developing networks and interest groups. This environment facilitated the roles of the CGE at national level, the GETT at departmental level and that of various institutes for gender and women at certain institutions of higher learning, for instance the IGWS at the University of Pretoria. Thus the significance of the liberatory nature of the intellectual work that women came to be engaged in was elevated and shifted from the margins to the mainstream. Consequently, from the perspective of Mama (2001) the intellectual space was transformed and made to serve the collective interests of women and gender equity.

However, some scholars warn that the process of democratisation during the liberal moment in South Africa offers its own challenges.

> ...democratisation, even at its pinnacle is full of opportunities and stumbling blocks for women. Although South Africa is indeed an example of woman's breakthrough to state power and the public sphere, analysis reveals the extraordinary challenges women face in attempting to participate fully in public life even at an ideal moment in the most celebrated case. South Africa serves thus as a sobering reminder that democratisation in the best circumstances presents serious limits for those hoping to enter, speak, and be heard in the newly opened public sphere (Walsh, 2006:106).

Women equally face challenges as regards the process of democratisation and gender mainstreaming. Although gender mainstreaming has been hailed as an impressive strategy for achieving gender equality, it faces a fair amount of criticism emanating from the West, but applicable to most contexts. Researchers point to the fact that while

it has created impressive guidelines, no single blueprint is available for best practices. An equally important shortcoming is the fact that gender mainstreaming does not promote any substantive equality because it focuses on integrating women into existing policies without informing these policies by means of current feminist or gender theories (Guerrina, 2002: 1). It has also been critiqued for being overly rhetorical, displaying the following features:

- A method without any specific outcome and funding;

- Contradictory objectives;

- Targets – does not always address the most important gender problems;

- No sanctions – efforts to solve gender problems dependent on the political priorities in the member state (Mosesdottir, 2005:10).

## 6.8   Evaluating South African Performance in Gender Equality

The South African state meets the criteria for evaluating gender mainstreaming progress 10 years after Beijing which were developed by Moser, one of the forefront gender scholars and activists. These consist of the following four stages:

- Adopting the terminology of gender;

- Putting a gender mainstream policy in place;

- Implementing gender mainstreaming;

- Evaluating or auditing the practice of gender mainstreaming (Moser & Moser, 2005:11; Moser, 2005:5).

According to international research, the evidence to date suggests that there have been greater advances in some stages than others. Thus widespread consensus exists with respect to stage one, embracing the terminology, as well as stage two, putting a gender policy in place. Progress has been less where stage three is concerned, implementing gender mainstreaming, or stage four, evaluating or auditing the practice in institutions (Moser, 2005:585). South Africa as a signatory to the Beijing platform of action has

performed fairly well. The South African Constitution and the work of the CGE illustrate the state's positive acceptance of the gender mainstreaming terminology and development of a gender policy. Progress is slow in realising stage number four: that of evaluating and auditing gender in practice.

Table 6.2 − Summary of South African gender statistics

| INDICATORS | RATIO/ (YEAR) | RATIO/ (YEAR) | 2015 MDG TARGET | PROGRESS TOWARDS TARGET |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ratio of girls to boys (girls per 100 boys) in**: | | | | |
| Primary education | 98:100 (1994) | 96:100 (2001) | Equal access to primary education for boys and girls | Have already attained |
| Secondary education | 118:100 (1994) | 112:100 (2001) | | Have already attained target |
| Tertiary education | 92:100 (1994) | 116:100 (2001) | Equal access to secondary education for boys and girls | Have already attained target |
| **Ratio of literate females to males (15-24 years)** | 111:100 (1996) | 109:100 (2003) | Equal female to male ratio | Have already attained target |
| **Share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector** | 41% (1996) | 43% (2001) | Equal access to employment | Slow |
| **Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament** | 26 (1994) | 33 (2004) | Equal access to public office | Potentially should reach target |

United Nations (2005:20).

South Africa's performance with regard to the promotion of the Millennium Development goal of promoting gender equality by 2015 is also illustrative of the country's remarkable achievement in the realisation of some of Moser's stages. The country's performance in this regard is important because the MD goals were a target set for members of the United Nations to address pertinent global problems stemming from issues of education, health social development and environmental sustainability, and any country's positive performance is illustrative of meeting appropriate global targets. With reference to gender, the goal is the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary school by 2005 and at all levels by 2015 (United Nations 2005).

Hence, in the context of a higher education transformation agenda informed by the broad social justice mandate of redressing gender inequalities and all discriminatory tendencies, meeting these goals is important for the country.

On the basis of this country's performance with regard to meeting the MDG of gender equity, by means of the gender equity strategy of the DOE and the government through the work of the CGE, South Africa is progressing well in addressing gender imbalances in education and the country as a whole. Furthermore, social science research into the country's performance indicates that in meeting the MDG target of gender equity, South Africa stands a greater chance of experiencing improved economic growth, and a reduction in fertility and infant mortality and malnutrition. This is an added advantage because when gender equity is enhanced there are high economic returns in investing in women and girls (Ghadia & Klasen, 2004:19).

The exemplary performance of South Africa in implementing gender equity, when interpreted using the resources approach, is worth discussion. The said approach proposes that gender equality is defined as gender parity, in numbers, within all the different levels of education. Its definition of gender is primarily descriptive and biological (Unterhalter, 2004: 1). There is nothing wrong with equalising the participation rates of male and females in the system, but it would be wrong if other aspects of gender equality are not considered. The structuralist approach is an improvement: it looks at gender as being more than a number parity issue but perceives it as a social construct with inequalities shaped by social relations, institutions and cultural forms. For its proponents, the achievement of gender equality is not limited to participation parity but should include the removal of gender-discriminatory institutional or cultural formations (Unterhalter, 2004:2). Therefore, according to the structuralist approach, numbers only address gender equity superficially: for countries really to advance gender equity there must be transformation of other aspects of schooling and the socio-economic arena, through holistic gender mainstreaming. South Africa still has a long way to go in this regard.

Unterhalter's explanation of the structuralist approach also evidences certain similarities with the progressive agenda of leftist feminists who perceive gender inequalities as

socially constructed by the capitalist system's division of labour. For these feminists, gender equity can be achieved by the promotion of the GAD agenda: challenging the neo-liberal paradigm and promoting radical gender justice. Furthermore, the structuralist approach contains strands of Young's theory of change in the elimination of the five faces of oppression discussed earlier, particularly the exploitative division of labour in capitalism and its impact on gender injustice. Applying the said approach to South Africa's performance in terms of the MDG reveals that there is still work that has to be done, because the structural and institutional practices that have contributed to gender inequality are still left intact. Leftist feminists defend the MDG because they view these goals as an opportunity to think widely about how gender equity can be achieved in education so as to transform society. However, within the feminist movement, there are groups that perceive the MDG in a negative light. This critical group regards the MDG as an ambitious project with an inadequate conceptualisation of gender exploitation (Unterhalter, 2005:122). With regard to this dismissal of the MDG, this study concurs with Unterhalter that it is crucial to affirm the contributions to the MDG as one step towards the achievement of gender equity.

A further reading of the South African performance with regard to the MDG shows that while the figures in the table above indicate that there is a sizeable number of women with seats in parliament, progress towards achieving gender parity in employment is slow nationally. With reference to education, Unterhalter asserts that "women comprise a lower proportion of head teachers and my guess is that because women employed as teachers are clustered at the lower grading levels the ratio of women to men's earned income in the education as in formal employment is generally lower" (Unterhalter, 2004:11).

At institutional level, while the gender participation rates are impressive, the picture of gender disparity is glaring in terms of the percentage of women in decision making positions and the ratio of estimated women's earnings to those of men. For instance, women record lower educational attainments than men at school level – causing throughput rates to continue as male-dominated (Moleke, 2005:7). At tertiary level, there continues to be a low proportion of female students in professional study fields and science. Even in parliament, research shows that the revolution remains incomplete

while women are excluded from full participation in political life due to the continued dominance of gender stereotyping, patriarchal norms and conservatism (Britton, 2002 ). This is clear in the mismatch between written legislation and practice and this also needs to be addressed (Samuel, 2001:21). A major force that gender activists and women in general have to reckon with is neo-liberalism and globalisation which has entrenched the phenomenon of the feminisation of global labour, contrary to the promise of economic prosperity and poverty alleviation (Benjamin, 2001:68). Equally important is the HIV and AIDS pandemic that has reached crisis proportions for women in South Africa, with them being the hardest hit (Jobson & Wyckoff-Wheeler, 2003:7). The list of issues that are still hindering the quest for a complete revolution in or transformation of gender equality is not exhaustive. However, it has highlighted those that are pertinent and appear in local research publications. What is of interest about the list is also that it consists of issues which are high on the agenda of the IGWS at the University of Pretoria.

## 6.9    Women's Studies Programmes in the Global Debate

The role of women's studies programmes in higher education has been commended throughout the world as playing an important role in advancing critical feminist thought while maintaining high academic standards (Moghadam, 2001:5). Women's studies programmes have made tremendous contributions in developing feminist conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches that have challenged the conventional approaches (Stromquist, 2001:373.) The mandate of such programmes is to equip students with the discourse of feminism and broadly related discourses (Rosenfelt, 1984:170). These programmes proliferated enormously in the 1990s, partly due to the impact of the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action and its call for gender mainstreaming policy and practice. In this context, there have been renewed efforts in the negotiation of the recognition of women's studies as a new body of knowledge and theory in higher education. Programmes of this nature play such an important role in the academic field that its advocates argue that without them, feminist scholarship and teaching would completely disappear (Rosenfelt, 1984:171). Consequently ground that has been won towards mainstreaming women's issues and gender equality in pursuit of economic and social justice would be lost. Furthermore, the critical feminist discourse that has added value to the academic and social arena by advancing social justice concerns would also

disappear. Hence it is no surprise that in the Western world and in African contexts, women's studies programmes continue to exist and to advance gender equality despite criticism and financial challenges. For instance, "It is said that women's studies lack academic rigor, evince ideological biases, and are insular and isolated" (Moghadam, 2001:5), and they have been obliged to struggle for scarce financial support from higher education managements (Stromquist, 2000:373).

However, while these programmes continue to fight for academic legitimacy and complete acceptance, the case that is made in support of them in universities outweighs these criticisms by a large margin. Most such programmes that house critical feminists play a crucial role in taking nation states and international organisations to task when gender justice is breached in any form. Therefore, these programmes will continue to play an important role in advancing gender justice and a socially just economic order. The IGWS at the University of Pretoria is one such.

## 6.10  Background to the Institute of Gender and Women Studies

The IGWS was established in the 1990s. This occurred in a context in which there was a renewed focus on gender equity on the global scale, as a result of the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action and owing to South Africa's new democratic dispensation, with the call to emancipate women from all forms of oppression and transform higher education as stated by former president Mandela.

The impetus for the establishment of this institute stemmed not only from global and national action, but also from Western financial support, ideological and theoretical models. The financial support in the case of IGWS originated from Germany, which was responding to the European Union's adoption of gender mainstreaming policy in general, and specifically to the local focus on promoting international academic networks in higher education. The German body responsible for implementing this is the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), through the programme called "Exporting German Academic Courses" (IGWS, 2002:1).

A German university directly involved in the DAAD programme is the University of Applied Sciences in Kiel, which entered into a collaborative agreement with the

University of Pretoria in 2001. As a result of the agreement, the IGWS was born; it was modelled on the structure and content of the Institute for Women's Research and Gender Studies at the University of Kiel. Thus the IGWS at Pretoria adopted a research business model based on that of the University of Kiel (IGWS, 2000).

### 6.10.1 The Mandate

The institute is mandated by the University to be a trans-disciplinary institute, which achieves its objectives through research, support of formal and informal academic programmes and community awareness and involvement that is historically and socially contextualised and critical (Constitution of IGWS, 2004:1).

### 6.10.2 Vision

The vision of the institute is that of a society in which women and men are free from sex and gender based discrimination and are able to interact with each other in a manner that allows them to realise their full potential. Such a society will be an equitable and just one and will encourage the flourishing of both women and men (Constitution of IGWS, 2004:1).

### 6.10.3 The objectives of the institute are:

- To conduct critical research on sex, gender and sexuality;

- To promote excellent teaching in formal and informal programmes on sex, gender and sexuality;

- To engage critically with international human and women's rights conventions and national legislation;

- To raise critical issues relating to sex, gender and sexuality for debate and discussion that could contribute to a continuous reshaping of Southern African society;

- To promote and support sex and gender equality and equity across the university as well as the broader Southern African society (Constitution of IGWS, 2004:2).

The overall objectives of the IGWS and its approach to gender equality and empowerment are informed not only by developments on the African continent but also by international best practices. This is explicitly stated in the objective of engaging critically with international conventions on gender equality. Since the IGWS is locally committed to the goal of promoting gender equality at the University of Pretoria and the wider South African society, to this end, it conducts critical research on gender, promotes teaching excellence in gender and continuously contributes to the building of a society that celebrates gender equality.

The vision and mission of the IGWS are couched in the neutral language of liberal theory and feminism. This is evident in the kind of society it envisages: a just, equitable society where women and men will flourish free from gender based discrimination. Such a society is not very different from the one envisioned by liberal feminists – particularly the notion of equality in society. The mission and vision appear to be more reformist than transformational and do not appear to be informed by the socialist or even the African feminist perspective. The IGWS emerges more as a unit that supports the current status quo of neo-liberalism in the South African context because it makes limited reference to socio-economic transformation informed by socialist feminists.

The IGWS supports the integration of gender into the curriculum across faculties, focuses on gender research, non-formal training and outreach, gender advocacy and networking globally and locally (IGWS, 2003 annual report: 1-4). These activities are undertaken by university personnel and external experts on gender issues since the institute employs no permanent staff. This emerged as a crucial shortcoming because it implies that there is no central person who will facilitate the continuity of the programmes and the attempts to mainstream gender. From the perspective of the critique of current trends towards the marketisation of higher education (Apple2005), the absence of permanent staff is also an indication of the casualisation of academic labour and academic capitalism explained by (Slaughter and Leslie 2001). This implies that gender equality training sessions are packaged with a price label in order to make a profit and the facilitators are hired with the profit motive in mind.

The IGWS is housed within the faculty of humanities and functions as an interdisciplinary, independent, interfaculty unit for the promotion of gender equity. The positive aspects of the institute lie in its independent status because it is able to represent the full scope, complexity and vitality of gender and women's studies, without much domination from a controlling body or faculty. Consequently, the institute is able to bring to the fore issues of gender equality and women's studies, locating them within local and global debates informed by higher education transformation and the social justice mandate. Since 1994, these concerns have been evident in the activities of the institute as it began to grapple with gender equity and equality in post independence and democratic South Africa. Like its counterparts in the West, the institute looks through a critical feminist lens in analysing progress towards gender equity and mainstreaming in policy and practice.

The existence of the IGWS at the University of Pretoria illustrates one of the positive achievements in the implementation of gender equity, and accordingly in fulfilling the national mandate in this respect. As this is a positive step, it is useful to indicate the extent of its conformity to this national policy imperative. This step can be characterised as integrationist: implying an integration of gender issues with the purpose of reforming gender relations. This step is supported by liberal feminists who perceive public institutions as crucial in promoting gender equity, even if the measures are small. The optimistic liberal feminists regard this as a starting point even if it is piecemeal and the status quo is left unchanged (Razavi and Miller, 1995: ii). It is useful to employ the analysis of radical feminist critique as well, in positioning the role of the institution as regards implementing gender equity. A radical feminist approach is agenda setting, and attempts to transform the thrust of policy as it brings women's concerns into the mainstream (Razavi and Miller, 1995: ii). In the South African context, the gender equality agenda has been set at national level and institutional level. Illustrations of this process are evident firstly in the constitution informed by human rights and gender rights, and the national higher education transformation agenda. Secondly, at institutional level, the adopting of the transformation agenda by higher learning institutions and the formulation of institutional policies that promote gender equity represent instances. Hence an institution of higher learning like the University of Pretoria has little choice but to prioritise gender equity in its policies and practices

through adopting the transformation agenda that encapsulate gender equity as a priority – in its Innovation Generation document, and by establishing the IGWS. Agenda setting for gender equity was implemented through these processes and consequently the University of Pretoria was taking a stance in advancing gender and social justice. The process of agenda setting at the University of Pretoria can be described as exemplary at the rhetorical level and in terms of complying with the national policy requirements. However, when it comes to an examination of the tone and content of the documents that are intended at guiding gender equity, most of them are informed by the integrationist approach. Most are couched in the language of liberal feminism that suggests incremental change. As a result, they tend not to adequately address the movement towards gender transformation. Consequently, in order for the institution to promote genuine gender equality, it needs to be cautious and guard against the trend of routinely marginalising good gender intentions and not translating them into meaningful social action.

According to international research on the institutionalisation of gender equity, there are three factors that are useful in conditioning an organisational response in this respect. They are the organisation's degree of independence from external pressures; the organisational mandate, the ideological mandate and the existence and capacity of internal policy advocates (Razavi and Miller, 1995:6). While the above factors were used to analyse international public organisations, an attempt will be made to employ them in the case of IGWS. When the three factors are used to provide an illustration of the university's response to gender equality, a great deal is revealed. The factors of external pressure and influences involve issues of accountability and, as a public institution; the University of Pretoria is accountable to the government and needs to promote the mandate of the latter. Since it does not depend on government funding alone, it is also responsible to other external stakeholders such as funders and donors. As has been indicated above, the South African government has been an avid supporter of gender equality owing to the new democratic dispensation. Educational institutions too must follow suit and they are accountable to the Department of Education which has also put gender equity mechanisms in place within its policies and practices as all levels of schooling. Gender equity has been one of the key focuses and performance indicators in the educational arena and is therefore a top policy priority. Therefore, with such an

array of external pressures and influences, the University of Pretoria has been required to institutionalise gender equity through the establishment of the said institute and to aim at meeting one of the transformation pillars of higher education: increased and broadened participation, by increasing the rate at which females participate in higher education. With regard to donors and funders, in the case of the IGWS, the German academic exchange service is one of the main financiers. So the institute as a whole must reflect the gender equity and mainstreaming discourse that the donor agency promotes. IGWS has performed exceedingly well in this area, as evidenced in the content of the courses offered and the international calibre of the gender and feminist facilitators invited.

The second factor of the internal policy advocates and refers to gender entrepreneurs, proponents of innovation within the organisation: "An important factor conditioning response of staff members willing and able to promote a new issue and equipped with skills ranging from the more advanced and analytical, to brokering and bargaining with different actors to line up support" (Resave and Miller, 1995:5). Gender entrepreneurs have been required to provide convincing justifications for the relevance of gender to their organisations. At the operational level, this is seen in the progressive calibre of the personnel at IGWS and their activities. However, while there are gender entrepreneurs within the Institute and the university community at large, the former faces a major challenge since it is operating without a head and permanent staff, as indicated earlier. The fact that it lacks important leadership is an illustration of the marginalisation of the social justice agenda through the casualisation of academic work. This phenomenon, described in Chapter 4, needs to be addressed by gender entrepreneurs so as to further the agenda of social justice.

The third factor of the organisational mandate, ideological and procedural, involves the way in which the objectives of the organisations fit with the issue of gender equity. "Institutionalizing a new concern is facilitated if it has an easy fit with the organizational mandate" (Razavi and Miller, 1995:6). The University of Pretoria mandate is informed by the broad transformation agenda of the democratic dispensation, which has been discussed earlier in the form of three transformation pillars: 1. Increased and broadened participation; 2. Responsiveness to societal needs and 3. Cooperation

and governance. The three pillars are interrelated, and all of them provide room for gender equity. However, the first two more explicitly offer fertile ground for the promotion of gender equity because they encapsulate gender parity and gender mainstreaming as conceptualised by the state and state machinery that is in place for the promotion of gender equity. At institutional level, gender equity is encapsulated in the strategic document regarding the "innovation generation" and more directly through the activities of the IGWS. The role of its staff is to provide a convincing justification for the relevance of gender equality in theory and practice. They are up to date with the current issues and debates in this respect.

## 6.11  Implementation of Gender Equality at the University of Pretoria

The above sections have furnished an analysis of the establishment of the IGWS in a context influenced by feminist movements from WID to GAD and currently by gender mainstreaming. In the section that follows an analysis and interpretation of participants' experiences at IGWS is provided.

The responses to the question, regarding what the institute does, indicate that its focus falls on training informed by gender equality, research and service to the community. Below, it is suggested that the Institute has made a number of contributions in terms of promoting gender equality at the University of Pretoria and the society at large. The noble contribution of the Institute has occurred alongside a number of challenges.

With regard to training, all three participants indicated that the IGWS focuses on offering informal gender and sexuality training to both internal and external community members. In terms of training, it disseminates information to the university community and the general public on gender related debates, as stipulated in its constitution. This is distributed via informal and formal training workshops, forums and information seminars with a focus on gender, equality and sexuality. IGWS makes use of a cadre of gender experts from the academic pool and relevant external professionals, depending on the nature and scope of its workshops.

The commitment of the IGWS to gender equality and related concerns is reflected in most of its activities and programmes which in turn are a modified translation of the broader national mandate, encapsulated in the transformation pillars of increased and broadened access and responsiveness to societal needs and challenges. The data gained from the IGWS participants reiterate these broad policy intentions. For instance the 2005 Business Plan of IGWS stated the following with regard to teaching and training:

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**Objective** - To promote critical teaching in formal and informal programmes

**Action Plan**:

**Teaching**

- Develop a generic module in feminist and gender theory for post graduate research purposes

- Develop web-based course on feminist and gender theory

**Training**

- Develop generic short courses in gender mainstreaming

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A further reading of the responses related to the issue of teaching and training indicates that the Institute is focused more on informal training than on the academic teaching of gender issues. The role of training is couched in the language of commercialisation that is intended more for profit than for the common good. Related to this, the training presupposed a limited and biased position as to the various intricacies of the promotion of gender equality. The limited nature of this role has been identified as a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Research is the main activity of the Institute, which concentrates on research into current issues in gender and other related areas such as race, class and HIV/AIDS prevention. In focusing on research, the centre fulfils the universal mission of teaching, research and service to the community of higher education. But its task does not end

there; it has re-invented and added relevancy to the research mission by putting gender at the centre of its research.

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**Objective – To conduct critical research**

**Action plan**

- Identify UP research team willing to publish in collaboration with IGWS on gender and related issues

- Initiate collaborative international projects e.g. gender and engineering

- Host a monthly gender seminar focused on critical gender issues

- Host international expertise to present academic papers

- Publish a collection of presentations delivered at the gender seminars (IGWS Business Plan, 2005:1).

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The institute's additional objective is to conduct critical research: a positive attribute. The inference that can be deduced is that research is informed by the language of the four dimensions of critical thinking, namely identifying and challenging assumptions, challenging the importance of context, imagining and exploring alternatives and developing reflective scepticism (Scott, 2000:3-4).

According to the director, the main focal point of the centre is research into gender and women's issues in all contexts: rural and urban. In this area, an example of this focus is research on women's access to water and land. Improving gender equality at top management level is also a strong research area, because the university management is still predominantly male dominated. Although at the time of the interview, the centre was still to hold its strategic planning workshop, the facilitator pointed out that the centre plays a crucial role in gender research and training. The elements of this focus are to be found in solid research, the capacity building of women at tertiary level and

developing a substantive theoretical framework so as to remove the perception that the institute is a woman's complaints centre.

The emphasis on interdisciplinary research stood out as a valuable feature in terms of the perspectives of the facilitators. The director further indicated that the merit of the centre is found in difference, which implies that the centre attempts to positively do things differently, while contributing to the core business of the university. Her sentiments regarding research illustrate that the production of research by the centre is not conditioned by the traditional research agenda characteristic of the University of Pretoria. The results have been that the said agenda attempts to address relevant issues concerning gender transformation in particular and institutional transformation in general that are conducive to gender justice.

The overall research agenda of the institution displays strands of both the liberal reformist and transformational approaches to feminism. However, the liberal one is more dominant as evidenced by the critical research position of the centre. Less central is the transformative approach although topics display attempts to break with conventional research, for example the focus on *Ubuntu* – questions of humanness and polygamy. This alternative research agenda is espoused by the director of the Institute. Moving away from the traditional mainstream research agenda would therefore be a positive step for it. The success of this endeavour needs to be accompanied by the use of critical feminist discourse that holds to a more inclusive and holistic conceptualisation of gender equality. However, given the challenges that the Institute has been required to address, it is in danger of being affected by issues of power that may dictate the research agenda and sway it to the demands of conventional research that supports the status quo.

Hence, what appears to be marginalised, in terms of the responses of the participants, is any consideration of some important aspects of critical research and critical teaching since these are not pronounced explicitly:

- Studying marginalised oppressed groups who are not given the authority to speak;

- Approaching inquiry in ways that are interpretative of social practices which are taken for granted;

- Locating meaning in broader social, cultural and political spheres;

- Developing themes problematically and as being open to interrogation;

- Editing the researcher into the text and not presuming that she/he is a neutral character in the research;

- Being reflexive of its own limitations, distortions and agendas;

- Being concerned about the impact of the research in producing more equitable and just social relationships (Shacklock and Smyth, 1998:3).

Service to the community is a third focus of the Institute. It is perceived as important in so far as it makes the university more responsive to the community and relevant to the context in which it operates. With specific reference to the academic community of women at the University of Pretoria and surrounding communities, the data highlighted that the Institute has provided the much needed additional space for them to work on issues that are of importance and relevance to women in a supportive environment However, community development was only mentioned in passing during the interviews, without many further details being provided by the second facilitator. For participants that are located in higher education it is expected that they would be aware of the goals of higher education: teaching, research and service to the community. That the participants from the IGWS hardly mentioned community involvement may indicate that the centre devotes scant attention to this matter. Its marginalisation may impact negatively on the attempts of the centre to be relevant to its stakeholders, particularly the broader community. Consequently, for the institute to adequately contribute to the broader role of the university, it needs to take community outreach seriously, since it is important for the University of Pretoria to be socially relevant to the needs of the country.

In most of the Institute participants' sentiments with reference to issues of research and training, there is an entrenched, reserved and liberal tone. Hence the implementation of the mission and objective of the institute can be described as policy compliant and not

as critical engagement with policy. The neutral nature is also reflected in the role of the facilitators, described below.

## 6.12  The Role of Facilitators at IGWS

Asked what their roles are in the broader mission of the institute, the facilitators' responses revealed the following: research capacity building for gender equality; training on gender specific workshops and life skills; disseminating information on gender equality and forging networks for the centre. The research capacity building role mentioned by one facilitator is in line with the broader mission of the Institute and other institutes in other universities, but it falls short of indicating the nature of the research that is undertaken. There is a disjuncture in this instance because the Institute explicitly states that it is promoting critical research, but the facilitators do not qualify the research in explicit terms. In this manner, the critical research role appears to be downplayed in practice: this is a crucial issue because it also impacts on the marginalisation of radical social justice and the agenda of the IGWS appears to be compromised. It needs to state the nature of the research it undertakes explicitly, without being apologetic about its gender activist role.

## 6.13  Conceptualisation of Social Justice

The main project of transformation runs through all the participants' conceptualisations of social justice and the role of the IGWS in it.

According to the director, genuine social justice in the South African context is based on the South African Constitution, the foundation of which is equality for all. Other important characteristics of social justice are socio-economic rights and equality, as well as racial and gender equality. For the director, social justice and its broad notion is proposed as a framework to be adopted because of its impressive credentials.

> I will start off by giving you a more general definition. I think social justice in the context of South Africa …. is a kind of social justice given in the preamble of our constitution (which) refers to a society where we have equality… racial but also sex and gender equality. So the understanding of social justice would be an approach or even a programme where we have upliftment, socio-economic upliftment and policies that address the injustices of the past. So I think the university as

an institution of higher education should accept these broad notion of social justice and I think this kind of understanding should be the same in the whole university context (IGWS 1).

The sentiments of the director are expressed in a similar tone to the congratulatory one accorded to the South African Constitution by gender researchers in terms of making provision for the promoting of gender equality based on human rights (Walsh, 2006). Social justice is provided for by the constitution; the director further mentions socio-economic upliftment as an element of social justice, but expresses this more in liberal terms which fall short of the radical social justice of socio-economic transformation. It appears, then, that the kind of social justice that is proposed by the director is a reformist one. This is a trend that is also displayed in the sentiments of the other facilitators:

> Several policies that the university has established in terms of social justice. I am sure you are aware of all of them… There is one on code of conduct, there is one on discrimination, and there is one on equal opportunity, the one of sexual harassment. And there is also the transformation forum (Facilitator 1).

The neutral and reformist language of social justice is also displayed in the above utterances. This indicates that the existence of policies that are framed to promote equality and the elimination of oppressive circumstances constitutes an element of social justice. In principle this might seem appropriate, but in terms of the radical social justice that informs this study, the existing policies still fall short of achieving such justice since they are framed in the language of liberalism. However, despite the reformist language, there was an instance of an alternative radical stance in the other facilitator's position:

> I don't think the university is committed to gender studies – building women's capacities at the university. …I don't think the university has placed a good policy. But you should know from looking at the composition of staff. There is very little change in terms of race and class. I think there doesn't seem to be much commitment to bring gender to the fore. If you take one instance, the fact that there is no woman at top management at the university. I mean this illustrates to you the problem we have. So I think there is a big discrepancy in terms of social

justice concerns and real concrete implementation on the ground (Facilitator 2).

According to this facilitator, concern with social justice is of crucial importance if gender justice is to be achieved. However, the promotion of both social justice and gender justice is hindered by inadequate transformation in terms of staff composition at the institution. Another inhibiting feature of gender justice consists of the policy implementation discrepancies, evident in a lack of transformation. The facilitator is candid about her lived experiences, as a counter to the emphasis on social justice that practically promotes just practices for every member of the university community.

At IGWS management level, the important role that it is playing in gender equity is also acknowledged. According to the director of the institute, the university as a whole displays a principled response to the national mandate of social justice and the IGWS translates this into its various activities and programmes.

The director conceptualises social justice as an element of the broad national transformation agenda of higher education in South Africa. She further provided concrete examples of social justice criteria, such as a transformed and representative student body, the adoption and implementation of employment equity and the work that the institute is doing in terms of gender justice. For instance, the agenda of projects that illustrate matters of social / gender justice at the institute includes issues like gender and socio-economic upliftment of women as regards rural women, a biannual gender mainstreaming workshop, and training on sexuality

The director further indicated that there are impediments to the full realisation of the social justice mandate in general and gender mainstreaming in particular. The most pressing one was the interim phase of the institute: operating in limbo and uncertainty surrounding the director's and coordinator's position. Both the positions are part-time, which affects the implementation of the policy of IGWS. Another challenge is that the institute does not offer academic courses related to gender and women's studies. It is only permitted to offer non-credit bearing developmental courses on such issues. This implies that the knowledge produced and disseminated by the institute is limited to only the participants on the courses offered and is not available to other areas of the

academic community that could benefit from an injection of gender mainstreaming into the activities. The challenges illustrate the marginalisation and downplaying of the important role that this institute plays and, more importantly, of the intellectuals and feminists that are housed in this institute. This state of affairs leads to the institute operating with limited potential capacity as far as intellectuals and gender activists are concerned, which in the long run would leave the University of Pretoria community with impoverished and biased research and training as regards gender equality and social justice.

The conceptualisation of social justice by the institute is located rather in the distributive paradigm of liberal social justice than in the transformative one of radical social justice, discussed in chapter two. Although mention is made of transformation as an aspect of social justice, the crux of its members' argument is the advancement of social justice by redistributing socio-economic resources while maintaining the status quo of a capitalist socio-economic and political system. As has been mentioned in the literature, this conceptualisation is limited because it leaves the broader macro-economic system of capitalism and neo-liberalism intact, consequently perpetuating current social injustices. I am aware that it is next to impossible for the Institute to single-handedly change the status quo. What can be done is the forging of links and networks with progressive activists and intellectuals, like the radical left whose struggle against capitalism and neo-liberalism is consistent. For the IGWS to be more fully relevant to the agenda of progressive social justice, it needs to be informed by a more thorough transformative agenda that is attentive to forms of social justice and gender justice which are more holistic and inclusive, as in Young's five faces of oppression that advance utopian socio-economic liberty.

### 6.14  Conceptualisation of Gender

The common feature that identifies gender, according to the two facilitators, is gender mainstreaming in more progressive terms. As a rider to this, one facilitator proposes adopting an activist and vocal stance in support of gender equality throughout the university.

In addition to gender mainstreaming, the two facilitators indicate that the other focus of the institute falls on equity in general, with a special emphasis being placed on class and racial equality: for instance, in the project on building the capacity of women – growing its own timber. In other words, the centre provides a space for women to make a positive contribution to gender equality. Thus the way gender is conceptualised by this member is that it is informed by equality and empowerment, while being cognisant of issues of race and class. Furthermore, the contribution that the gender researcher needs to make should build capacity and not just end with creating knowledge.

The sentiments of the facilitators display a conceptualisation of gender that is informed by social justice. However, these participants further make the observation that the institution's conceptualisation of gender is still very limited. The dominant view of gender at the institutional level is informed by the traditional or conventional paradigm, with the following characteristics, as mentioned earlier: no women in top management and inadequate commitment to gender equality. It appears that there is inconsistency and limited commitment in this respect. One facilitator revealed that another disturbing feature of the university management is the obsession with the commercialisation of gender research: it appears to hold profit in higher regard than gender equality. This may be attributed to the global trend towards commodification of higher education and academic capitalism that is explained by Slaughter and Rhoades (2004). The impact of academic capitalism stands a chance of diluting the focus on gender equality, thus promoting the status quo of the marginalisation of gender.

The conceptualisation of gender by the participants reveals two approaches: liberal integrationist and leftist agenda setting. One project manager displayed the simplistic liberal approach characteristic of the WID agenda. However, the majority of participants reflected the more sophisticated theory of critical feminist discourse. For instance, these participants are opposed to the commercialisation of gender research by the university, which indicates that while the project of commercialisation (as is characteristic of modern universities) has infiltrated deep into every aspect of university life, there is resistance to practices like these. Even though the centre might succumb to this move in order to guard against closure, the resistant stance towards commercialisation is an important social justice move. In their reference to gender, most

of the participants from IGWS did not explicitly pronounce a preference for any form of feminism discussed in the earlier section. This occurrence may be an indication that feminism is treated with suspicion in some circles, as shown by Bozzoli (1999).

### 6.15  IGWS External Programmes and Linkages

The institute does not operate in isolation. It maintains both national and international linkages that advance the cause of gender equality. Of particular note is that already mentioned, with the University of Kiel in Germany. Continentally, the institute works with similar organisations in the SADC region, especially in Zimbabwe. Nationally the IGWS is affiliated to Gender Network – GENNET – and the government gender desk. In its local and global linkages, the Institute performs the onjectives listed below:

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**Objectives**

- To engage critically with international human and women's rights conventions and national legislation

- To raise critical issues relating to sex, gender and sexuality for debate and discussion that could contribute to a continuous reshaping of Southern African society

- To promote and support sex and gender equality across the university as well as the broader southern African society. (IGWS Business Plan, 2005:3)

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Some of the merits of IGWS lie in its linkages with counterparts in Europe and Africa. However, the institute's activities are limited in that staff do not make mention of international agencies such as the United Nations and the World Bank agenda on gender equality. While these two organisations themselves have been criticised for furthering a neo-liberal agenda that is opposed to social justice, their merit lies in putting the gender equity item on the global agenda and in taking nations to task for not meeting gender equity targets and indicators. For instance, the United Nations MDG of gender equity is considered as an important milestone towards the achievement of gender equality. It

would be advantageous for IGWS to be informed by the discourse of the MDG so as to be locally and globally relevant.

## 6.16 Challenges Facing IGWS

The generally pessimistic tone of most of the responses reflects the continued undermining of the institute by the university community as a whole, particularly those members that are resistant to change and women's empowerment. The compelling challenge that the institute faces is lack of funding, which contributes to its marginalisation. This is similar to the reason advanced by Psachoropoulos (1989): that educational reforms fail because of lack of financial commitment.

The negative attitudes of some members of the university community towards gender activism are visible in the perceptions held by some members of the university community regarding activism of this kind. According to the facilitator, gender activists are seen as troublemakers and rattlers of people's comfort zones. The dominance of patriarchal ways, as reflected and imbedded in the institutional culture that is described as "whiteism", is the main factor working against the spread of gender activism. Therefore it seems as if some members of the university community would rather support the status quo than embrace a shift to gender equality. For people living in comfort zones, such equality is not regarded as an urgent matter.

The project manager further made the observation that most of the policies that are in place at the institution are impressive because they are informed by the South African Constitution. However, problems arise when the policy is translated into practice. The policy intentions do not match the policy outcomes and this results in a situation where change is lacking, thereby maintaining the status quo that marginalises gender equality. For instance, with reference to the objective which states that critical teaching on gender equality is a mission of the institute, the facilitators' responses are neutral and do not explicitly indicate the critical nature of the training.

According to the facilitators, due to its marginalised status, the institute furthermore finds it difficult to find a core of women – particularly black – to reinforce it. Related to this is the difficulty of attracting new ideas to facilitate the process of re-inventing the

institute and making it profitable. The marginalised status of IGWS is reflected by the part-time status of the current coordinator position. Once again this state of affairs is a reflection of a mismatch between policy and outcome. In this instance, although the broad goal of increased and broadened participation as a transformation goal has been met by the University of Pretoria in terms of gender parity, it seems that among the cadre of graduates there are not enough gender activists. Another possible explanation of this situation may be the current trend in prioritising the natural sciences and business sciences at the expense of the human sciences and social sciences, coupled with the paucity of attempts at training the youth in a culture of human rights, democracy and the public good of higher education (Waghid, 2004).

At management level, the director identified the lack of identity, sense of belonging and interim status of the institute as a major challenge. Another huge challenge is the university management's half-hearted commitment to and hesitancy towards gender equality. This is translated into the inadequate funding with which the institute has had to live so that it must relentlessly and continuously look for finance. In doing so, the institute must also contend with competition from NGOs that are also searching for funds. This makes funding opportunities scarcer. The issue of scarcity of money is not only a problem faced by the institute alone but also by the other centres and institutes in the university. The competition for funds by the different units in general and the institute in particular reflects the global trend of the commodification and marketisation of higher education as eloquently described by Giroux in his article on higher education under siege (Giroux, 2004; Apple, 2005: 382). Regarding this matter, the institute has to re-invent its objectives and find ways of surviving in a context that is hostile to gender equality by unremittingly pursuing financial assistance from a variety of sources.

The overall challenge is that the IGWS has been obliged to operate in an environment that is heavily influenced by the current conservative and patriarchal organisational culture of the University of Pretoria. This scenario resonates with experiences of other women's studies centres in higher education in the West. According to Stromquist, patriarchy and other conservative forces continue to deviate from the path of genuine social justice as advocated by the feminist movement (Stromquist, 2001: 382). Coupled

with this are the dominant logic of neo-liberalism and the global trends already mentioned.

## 6.17 Dealing with Challenges

In addressing the challenges, the director indicated that the institute will continue to seek management support, particularly in terms of finance, and ensure that the policy obligation of gender equity as stipulated in the transformation agendas of higher education is fulfilled. Even though this situation is complex, all the participants indicated that adopting an optimistic outlook is a strategy for addressing the challenges: "Hoping for the best". This attitude reflects the radical social agenda for the 21st century. This agenda involves searching for the social justice inherent in capitalism even though the latter might be antithetical to social justice (Muller, 2000; Lebowitz, 2001). Related to this is looking for the possible in what is perceived as impossible, in the same manner that Davis (2004) suggests.

Another strategy that is common to all participants at IGWS is to educate the university community about gender by disseminating relevant information through publications, newsletters, forums, workshops and adopting a gender activist role, while lobbying for gender equity. For example, the annual workshops on gender mainstreaming and other scheduled workshops that deal with topical issues on gender equality such as HIV/ AIDS and the feminisation of poverty.

In the said context which is hostile to gender equity, resulting in the state of fluidity and uncertainty at IGWS, the participants reveal that it is difficult to provide a more concrete and positive response to the challenges described above. Hence in dealing with the challenge, the facilitator has adopted a wait and see attitude, while uncompromisingly advocating gender equity in theory and practice. It is important that the facilitators continue to advance the quest for gender equality, but it would be even more crucial if they were to take a position that is in line with that of the radical social justice advanced in this study. As members of the academic community and progressive thinkers, in a context that is hostile to radical social justice, they stand the danger of being ostracised and silenced by the dominant powers of conservative neo-liberalism.

But they possess within them a voice and agency that they can use as an instrument of liberation from the dominant systems described.

## 6.18  Other Emergent Factors

Issues that emerged as of concern are the problems of implementation and the conflict between official views and actual change in terms of putting policies into practice. An interesting observation which was made was that the university had reached change saturation; therefore there is no further need for change. According to this, the policies and relevant systems are in place and they comply with the transformation mandate and the requirements of the government. So as far as management is concerned, the required transformation has been achieved. Any other change that is marginal to the university's commitment to excellence and unsettles the comfort zone is not welcomed and, as a result, some members of the academic community and gender activists are in a state of uncertainty:

> We are not sure of where our main task should fall. Should it be academic research in terms of going to books and finding new theory that kind of stuff? As a lecturer I teach my Jurisprudence students theories and the theories of social justice, is that enough or where should we be... should we be part of a creative practical project and so on. Those are the kind of tensions that academics have (Director).

The uncertainty surrounding the task of the institute remains an issue of concern, both as a challenge that needs to be addressed and as representing an inadequate commitment towards gender from the position of management. Consequently a strong and vocal group is essential: it needs to lobby for repositioning the institute within a relevant academic department so that it can exert an influence. Another issue of interest is the director's admiration of the notion of social justice. According to her, the university should work towards injecting social justice concerns into the content of all its courses.

An attempt should be made to make the principled and theoretical commitment to social justice that many academics display more concrete and practical. As it stands it is more like a "pie in the sky" affair.

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The issues that the facilitator raised include contradictions in policy that compromise the ideals of social justice when put into practice. It appears that compliance with policy, even if it is informed by the ideology of white conservatism, serves the interests of those in power while those of the marginalised and oppressed are downplayed. In the case of South Africa, those in economic power are the white minority and some members of the liberal centre. In this regard, continued critical engagement by radical progressives with the matters of marginalisation of gender equality is suggested.

According to the facilitator, the university is living in the past with reference to gender and women's issues. For instance, the majority of the university community does not take the institute seriously and advocates of gender equity are regarded as loudmouths in the various departments. This observation seems to indicate that some circles in the university are out of touch with global movements such as the MDG and their target of gender equality. They seem to be informed by the Enlightenment and traditional rationality that is out of tune with the current era. Related to the issue of being "out of sync" is the silence on the triple oppression that is being experienced by women in South Africa and the attempts to counter it. There is a lack of concern with the class and race struggle that is part and parcel of an understanding of the nature of South African struggle for gender equality.

In this bleak context for the advancement of gender equity, one facilitator singled out the faculty of education as exemplary in promoting and advancing the principles of social justice and gender justice by matching policy and practice (Facilitator 2).

## 6.19 The Potency of the Oppositional Voice

The quest for social justice principles such as gender equity as an element of social justice may be canonised in policy declarations, but is peripheral to policy enactment and implementation at the University of Pretoria, as evident in the data analysis above. For social justice to be inserted into the centre of policy, the voice of leftist intellectuals must be brought to the centre. The proposals of the IGWS participants contain features of the oppositional voice to the mainstream.

For social justice and gender justice to be genuine, it needs to go beyond the façade of legislature and political rhetoric. The conceptualisation of gender as social justice appears to be repressed and ridiculed by some groups in the university. There are consequently important lessons for the promotion of gender equality to be learned by the University of Pretoria, especially the IGWS. For instance, the latter would benefit a great deal by engaging with diversity-building relationships between members from different communities and by addressing the patriarchal conservative organisational culture of the university so as to facilitate progress towards gender mainstreaming and gender equality. .

## 6.20 Conclusion

The narratives above have attempted to illustrate that attempting to achieve gender justice as an element of social justice on a global and local scale is fraught with complex dynamics and, though a noble ideal, it faces the danger of being an elusive quest if advocates of gender equity succumb to the overwhelming forces of neo-liberalism and globalisation. However, in the South African case, the picture is more positive because of the political will of the state and the fervent activism of feminist and radical scholars who are supporting gender justice despite a socio-economic environment that is not tolerant of it. Public higher education institutions, as in the case of IGWS, play an important role in utilising global feminist discourses and contextualising gender issues while addressing the ensuing challenges. However, there are limitations to the extent to which the university, through the IGWS, can realise a gender equity agenda of a critical feminist type owing to the ideological traditions that are still evident at management level.

In the following chapter the contribution of the Centre for the Study of AIDS at the University to social justice will be considered.