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Women's Employment Equity in South African Local Government: A Study of Senior Managers

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Signed by candidate

NH MAVUNDLA

DATE

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Affirmative Action
ANC	African National Congress
BWA	Business Women's Association
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DoJ&CD	Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
EEA	Employment Equity Act
GAD	Gender and Development
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LED	Local Economic Development
LRA	Labour Relations Act
MDB	Municipal Demarcation Board
MP	Mpumalanga
NPF	National Policy Framework
SA	South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UN	United Nations

UNICEF	United Nation's Children Fund
WAD	Women and Development
WC	Western Cape
WCD	Women, Culture, Development
WID	Women in Development

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ABSTRACT

This is an analytical as well as evaluative study which uses qualitative methods. The focus of the study is the local government sphere and its subjects are district municipalities and metros as administrative entities. The study seeks to understand whether local government has succeeded in meeting the objective of gender parity in senior management positions. The study draws extensively on the literature covering the historical evolution of women's movements and feminists theories. It reviews empirical evidence on the implementation of gender equality initiatives in South Africa. A data set on employment statistics of local government is utilised. As an analytical device, the data for local government is compared with national and provincial governments. The data is drawn from secondary sources namely the DPSA for provincial and national governments; and DPLG for local government. A random sample of 20 percent was selected for verification of the data with respective district municipalities.

A conceptual framework is constructed and applied to the evaluation of the South African experience. It identifies five elements that a sound empowerment approach should address namely: (i) the question of justice; (ii) the relationship between women and their empowerment; (iii) the relationship between women and their oppressors; (iv) the equality of opportunities and outcomes; and (v) the role of contextual factors.

The main finding is that the target of gender parity at senior management level set for March 2009 has been missed by a large margin. The problem is not confined to local government. For example, national government had only achieved 36 percent women representation in senior management positions; provinces 33 percent; metropolitan municipalities 32 percent and district (incorporating local) municipalities 20 percent. A review of comparative studies for the private sector shows an even more worrying situation. It reveals that the percentage of women executive managers increased from 14.7 to 25.3 percent;

female directors from 7.1 to 14.3 percent; Chief Executive Officers from 1.9 to 3.9 percent; and female Chairs of Boards from 3 to 3.9 percent between 2004 and 2008.

A detailed analysis of various explanations for this public policy failure concludes that this is due to a lack of investment in activities that enhance the capacities of women. This specifically relates to education. As a result, there seems to be a shortage of a critical mass of women with the education, skills and experience that are required in senior management positions. When considered in the context of a general skills shortage in South Africa, this conclusion is not surprising.

Reflecting on the elements of the conceptual framework, the study concludes that government has addressed all elements of the framework. In so far as it relates to priorities, the study finds that government has prioritised the outcomes of gender equality rather than providing opportunities at the earlier stages of the labour market value chain. Put differently, the targets were correct, but the time-frames were unrealistic in relation to the limited investment made.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background

For many decades, women were practically invisible to development planners and policy makers in South Africa and in other parts of the world. When women were eventually considered, assumptions about men's and women's roles in society were made, which largely ignored women's economic activities. Women's work was characterised by underpayment and attributed less value than that of men. Women's contribution to the economy was largely ignored, to the extent that even when women performed remunerative work, their contribution was rarely acknowledged as being positive towards the country's economy. The dominant view regarded women's participation in development as being outside the economic mainstream (Kothari, 2002:41).

Women's activities were seen as properly confined to family and childcare spheres, and therefore as domestic and not economic. Moreover, women were not made part of planning and decision making processes at work, in their communities, and even within their own households, which they were seen to service. Women were also marginalised in respect of rights, specifically, political and legal rights. For instance in South Africa, until recently, a woman was not allowed to buy a house without having her husband's approval. Moreover, women were denied access to education, which was a major contribution to their underdevelopment that was used as a basis for their marginalisation (Kothari, 2002:41). It should however be noted that even though in some cases women have significantly improved their level of education, lack of education is still an obstacle to women's development and empowerment. The deprivation of education that occurred in the past still stands in a way of women when it comes to occupying senior positions in different spheres of society.

After the 1994 democratic elections, the South African government strived to reverse this system of oppression towards South African women. It introduced a comprehensive system of regulation designed to govern employment practices and policies, and provide guidance to employers and employees alike. Key legislation includes the Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1995, Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997), Affirmative Action (AA) Policy of 1998 and the Employment Equity Act (EEA) of 1998. The overarching objective of this legislation is to promote equality of citizens, including women, particularly in the workplace environment. Women have long experienced gross discrimination in the workplace such as being overlooked for promotion to decision making positions and receiving salaries lower than those of their male counterparts.

This study examines the implementation of the women's employment equity policy in the South African local government. The research involves a review of the relevant academic literature, empirical studies on the subject, and a review and analysis of government publications on employment equity. A special focus is placed on employment practices of local government when it comes to senior management. An analysis of district municipalities' adherence to EEA requirements when employing senior managers is conducted. To contextualise the results of the local government employment data analysis, the three spheres of government – national, provincial and local - are compared.

In terms of legislation, special attention is placed on EEA and AA Policy, as they are the two main pieces of legislation that attempt to realise the Constitutional goals of equality in terms of gender, race and disability in the workplace. Administrative data, depicting gender equality at the senior management of the public service is used.

It should be clear, as stated in the title, that this research focuses on women occupying senior management positions in the local government workplace. For the purpose of this study, senior managers are people who occupy leadership

and decision making positions in their various spheres of government. Essentially, the study explores the implementation of EEA policy through the lenses of an alleged 'gap' between policy and implementation in South Africa (SA). Drawing on different theories and approaches to gender analysis, this study explores the extent of coherence in the approach adopted by government in advancing women empowerment. Based on the literature review and data analysis, the study advances a set of propositions about some of the factors that stand in the way of the achievement of gender equality objectives at local government level.

In chapters four and five, the study goes further and look at possible reasons for success or failure to meet the set gender equity targets; also the study briefly looks at what does the local government performance on employment equity tell us about the character of the 'gap' between policy making and implementation in municipal governance.

1.2 Research question

This study is essentially both analytical and evaluative. It is analytical to the extent that it uses theoretical frameworks to analyse the content of the policy and evaluative in that it uses data to assess how far have the stated objectives been met. The study addresses one main research questions:

- Have the municipalities met the targets set for gender equality in their employment of senior managers?

The answer to the research question will be drawn largely from the dataset constructed for this study. Literature review will be used to support the findings.

1.3 Importance of study

In his very first State of the Nation Address at the opening of the first democratically elected Parliament, former President Nelson Mandela emphasised that:

It is vitally important that all structures of government, including the President himself, should understand this fully that freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. All of us must take this on board that the objectives of the Reconstruction and Development Programme will not have been realised unless we see invisible and practical terms that the condition of the women of our country has radically changed for the better and that they have been empowered to intervene in all aspects of life as equals with any other member of society.” Former President Nelson Mandela further said, “The Government will, together with the representatives of the women themselves, look at the establishment of organs of Government to ensure that all levels of the public sector, from top to bottom, integrate the central issue of the emancipation of women in their programmes and daily activities (Mandela, 1994: online).

Thabo Mbeki who became the second democratic president, continued from where Nelson Mandela left off. Former President Mbeki also promoted the employment and empowerment of women. It was during his period in office that the first female Deputy President of South Africa, Phumzile-Mlambo Ngcuka was appointed. Mbeki’s Cabinet comprised of 43 percent women Ministers, which was generally regarded as amongst the highest globally. The target that was set in the 1997 Southern African Development Community (SADC) Declaration on Gender and Development had committed to at least 30 percent representation of women in political and decision making as the target for the sub-region (Muwanigwa, undated). South Africa surpassed this target.

During his time in office, many programmes and policies were put in place to promote gender equality in government structures. One of these included 50/50 target set for senior managers in government. Up until the end of former President Thabo Mbeki's time in the office, government had achieved 34 percent, which depicts a serious challenge considering that March 2009 was set as a deadline by which 50/50 gender representation was to be achieved at senior management services (DPSA, 2008a).

By definition the developmental state orientation regards legitimacy of government and democracy as key factors in governance. According to Pearson (2000:384), "gender is still a central part of the understanding, and the objective of development, providing a unique lens with which to deconstruct social institutions and processes, and a never ending new take on old issues, which has given birth to new aspects of development understanding and international policy." South Africa has attempted to give meaning to this argument. For example, since 1994, the country has adopted policies with a developmental orientation, such as the White Paper on Local Government, Employment Equity Act and Affirmative Action.

Government in particular has made significant progress in acknowledging the importance of women in the workplace. Policies have been developed and passed. However, the implementation and effectiveness of these policies have been questioned. Societal debates that have taken place ask whether affirmative action, for instance, is still needed and whether there should be a sunset clause attached to it. Others feel that affirmative action benefits the few and not the target group. The evidence provided in chapter three suggests that there is a gap between policies and their implementation.

Scholars differ in the theory of policy implementation as is shown later in this study. There are scholars who regard existence of policy as sufficient for its implementation while there are other scholars who believe that there needs to be

an explicit theory of policy implementation, the absence of which may result in a situation where policies only exist on paper. Brynard (2000:164) argues that policy implementation is a very crucial element of policy cycle and yet is ignored by many policy scientists. Scholars of policy science have sometimes viewed policy implementation as something that will happen by itself once policy has been legislated and institutions mandated with administrative authority. Even though this view has been debunked, South Africa is no where near a widely accepted predictive and prescriptive approach to implementation.

Furthermore, there is a need for an investigation of the nature of policy implementation and the 'gap' that allegedly exists between policy making and implementation. After 1994, the democratic government embarked on an aggressive process of policy formulation with a view to remove discrimination in our public policy and statute. This continued until the end of 1990s. The second government (1999 to 2004) shifted focus more towards implementation, which still continues. In effect, policy scientists and practitioners in South Africa are living in the "era of implementation" (Brynard, 2000:164-165).

This research is important because it does not only support women's employment equity in South African local government but it is also contributing to a growing body of knowledge on women's empowerment. It takes the existing employment statistics and explores how well government is faring in its pursuit of a set target of 50/50 representation in local government and in the other two spheres of government.

1.4 Problem statement

In many parts of the world including South Africa, women continue to work under a number of stereotypes in their respective workplaces. As a result of these stereotypes, women are often clustered in lower levels of employment. However,

there are few countries, like South Africa, that have explicit policies that provide adequate support for women employees (Date-Bah, 1997: ix).

There is also an ongoing debate among feminists on what constitutes women's oppression. There is a view that it is women's fault that they are oppressed because they have freedom of choice as to the kind of treatment they would like to receive. On the other hand, feminists like Kemp (1994:1) believe that degradation of women's work does not come from the women's tasks but from the social relations within which the tasks are performed. Although feminists may disagree as to what causes and constitutes women oppression in the workplace, they are united in their view that women employees are oppressed regardless of their colour (Kemp, 1994:1). This study concurs with Kemp's view that women are oppressed regardless of their colour and it is from this premise that this study reviews employment equity of all women in South African local government, not only of black women, even though they form a majority of women and were the most marginalised during the apartheid era.

As alluded to above, the oppression of women extends beyond the workplace to the community and ultimately to their homes. This study however focuses on local government as the place of work. It focuses on analysing the extent to which women are placed in senior positions within this sphere of government. The national and provincial spheres of government are used purely for comparative reasons.

The subject of gender equality is complex and emotive. This requires a researcher to constantly test her or his own assumptions in order to make a rational argument. As a woman, the author has had to adopt a position of participant and observer as the study unfolded. This means that at one instance, she had to draw from her own experiences to make sense of the material and at the same time, distance herself in order to objectively weigh up the evidence.

Evidence reveals that even though great strides have been taken by the South African government to emancipate women, there is still a big gap between women and men in the local government workplace environment regardless of the targets that have been set in pursuit of closing this gap. This is a problem that necessitated this study.

1.5 Aims of study

The study has two aims:

- Firstly, the study aims to assess the extent to which local government adhere to the requirements of Employment Equity Act of 1998 in appointing senior managers.
- Thirdly, the study aims to add value to the feminist work that has already been conducted on gender equity in the workplace, through local government.

1.6 Research methodology

This research is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Due to the nature of the subject, the qualitative research method has been used quite extensively. The quantitative research method is limited to the analysis of the employment data. All the data used in the analysis is drawn from secondary sources.

This study draws on different strands of feminist theory with particular relevance to the study of women and the development process. Drawing on these theories, the author has been able to construct her own analytical framework to apply in the analysis of South African gender equity policy and how it has been

implemented. The pieces of legislation that are analysed include the EEA; the AA Policy; and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

The analysis of employment data of district municipalities forms an important part of the study as it helps answer the question of whether municipalities have met their gender equity targets in senior management. The municipalities analysed are a mixture of rural and urban authorities found in each of the nine provinces. A wide search of literature was conducted, ranging from literature on the evolution of women's movements, how they are organised, the content of their demands to theoretical debates and empirical literature. References to other articles were used to expand the literature search. The research process was iterative in the sense that the initial literature search and the data analysis raised more questions about theory as well as context which warranted a further literature search and analysis.

Stated formally, the research method used in this study is evaluative research which uses policy analysis strategies. Although it is not about theory formulation, this study has elements of a deductive and inductive study. A deductive study is defined by Bryman (2001:8) as a process where the "researcher, on the basis of what is known about a particular domain and of theoretical considerations in relation to that domain, deduces a hypothesis (...) that must then be subjected to empirical scrutiny." While inductive studies, by contrast, infer theory from observations and findings of the study. Deductive and inductive studies rely on empirical analysis, mainly of a quantitative nature. While the present study refers to some empirical studies, and has a component that analyses data, it remains a qualitative enquiry that is not about formulating theory but using theory to understand social processes and using social outcomes to evaluate policy and the validity of theory.

The literature review, although an important part of this study could not provide all answers to the research questions. Quantitative data in the form of

employment data supplements the literature. The data is obtained from the Departments of Provincial and Local Government (PDLG) and Public Service and Administration (DPSA). The DPLG provided statistics of senior managers found in all municipalities of South African local government. The DPSA provided the same information but for provincial and national government departments.

The verification of the DPLG data was conducted by first asking the department itself about the how the data was collected. It turned out that the DPLG relies on the districts for submission of information, which means that the time lag between when data is collected and reported and how it is captured into a central system may result in errors. The statistics provided by the 46 districts includes the number of senior managers employed in the 231 local municipalities. A 20 percent sample of district municipalities was randomly selected and contacted by telephone and email to verify the data received. Further, all the six metropolitan municipalities were contacted to verify data received. In the case of Provincial and National governments, the data is drawn from PERSAL system, which is a payroll system used by government. This gave the researcher a degree of confidence in the accuracy of the data. The researcher therefore believes that the data used is reasonably reliable.

A decision on the research subject always raises question about why it was chosen. In this case, why the interest in women empowerment and why the local government sphere? Proponents of gender equity such as Kothari and international agencies such as United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF) believe that women bring a different perspective in decision making. As would be noted in chapter two of this study, women play different roles within a society, they do not share the same knowledge and experience as men. The perspective they bring is important when making decisions in the workplace, especially in the senior management echelon.

To use local government as a context in which the study is located was informed by the view that women's participation in senior management at national and provincial governments (public service) is reasonably well documented. On the other hand, there is not much reported on local government and less is known about how this sphere of government is performing on this important reform programme. Considering the fact that this sphere is the closest to the people, strengthened the author's conviction that the context of the study should be the local government level.

Within local government, district municipalities were chosen for better management of the study. The data for the 46 district municipalities includes the local municipalities which opens a window to a total of 277 local authorities. Adding the six metropolitan municipalities which are analysed separately covers the entirety of the South African local government system.

1.7 Summary of literature review

The second chapter of this study focuses on the evolution of feminist discourse; how women organised themselves; the content of their demands; and how the theories that both informed and explained women's position especially in relation to the development process developed. A brief synopsis of some of the elements covered in the literature on employment equity in South Africa is provided below.

1.7.1 Employment Equity

Essentially, employment equity advocates a non-discriminatory labour market where all participants have an equal opportunity to achieve and prosper. A non-discriminatory labour market has been legislated in South Africa. The LRA of 1995 sets out what constitutes discrimination and the EEA of 1998 contains provisions that are intended to promote and ensure non-discrimination. It is however, important to note that the EEA (1998: 2.6.2) states that it is not unfair

discrimination to exclude any person if they do not meet the inherent requirements of a job. It is also not unfair to implement AA Policy measures consistent with the EEA. Furthermore, it is important to take note of the fact that the presence of legislation does not ensure that no discrimination of any form will take place in the workplace. It is a responsibility of officials to ensure that they implement what has been stipulated in the legislation (Thompson and Woolard, 2002:1).

1.7.2 Women's occupations and local government

Even with some of the achievement in relation to gender equity, significant amount of work still needs to be done in achieving equality in the workplace between women and men, especially at local government level. Senior management positions in local government are largely filled by men even though local government has a significant role to play in the lives of South African women. Women are consumers of municipal services and at the same time, some of the women are service providers to municipalities. According to McKenzie (2004:14), in 2000 very few municipalities had begun to grapple with their role in ensuring gender equity.

Despite this, Mackenzie reflects positively on the efforts of the South African government noting that it is in a process of improving this situation by developing local government even further, through the introduction of a developmental local government agenda. Developmental local government entrusts municipalities with a responsibility of ensuring that inequalities within the sphere are addressed. Issues of gender are at the core of development and gender equality is “a developmental objective in its own right” (McKenzie, 2004:12). There are also supporting initiatives and frameworks that government has put in place to affect the transformation of local government in South Africa. These include the Five Year Local Government Strategic Agenda, which among other priorities encourages municipalities to pay more attention to women when developing their

Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and Local Economic Development (LED) strategies. There is also a Gender Equality Framework for Local Government that has been developed by National Government. The DPSA is tasked with rolling out this important piece of legislation.

McKenzie (2004:13) however cautions that if development is not engendered, it is endangered. This stresses the importance of gender equality in developmental local government. She argues that it is only when the potential of all human beings is realised that we can start talking about true human development. Effective development needs to understand and respond to gender based differences and power relations taking place in the workplace.

1.8 Limitations of the study

This is a desktop study and therefore relies heavily on other authors' theoretical views. Some of the accounts upon which this study draws are controversial in their findings about what is happening on the ground and could lead to incorrect interpretations of the situation. However, the literature has been carefully selected and interpreted critically in order to minimise this risk as much as possible.

A similar limitation is true in the case of the data used. Primary data collection such as conducting interviews has not been done due to limited time. The data was drawn from secondary sources – the DPLG in the case of local government and the DPSA in the case of the Public Service (Provincial and National governments). A limitation with the secondary data is that it is often collected for a different reason than that for which it is used here.

As indicated in the research methodology, verification of the DPLG data was conducted by contacting 20 percent of the district municipalities and all six metropolitan municipalities to confirm the figures provided.

1.9 Structure of the study

Chapter two starts by giving an introduction to the primary literature available on women and employment equity. This chapter is analysing the importance of women's employment equity as an area of study. The origin of gender inequality is also critically looked at. This chapter provides a broad overview of literature covering the historical evolution of feminism; the women's empowerment agenda in historical perspective and how women empowerment theory has evolved over time.

Chapter three provides an overview of the current state of gender equality or inequality in South African government. The strides that government has made in addressing gender inequality form a significant part of this chapter. Steps taken by government in mainstreaming gender at local government level are also critically explored. The changes that have taken place in the sphere of local government with the aim of empowering female employees also form part of this chapter. To undertake this analysis, the researcher makes use of the conceptual framework she constructed.

Chapter four analyses the employment data and discusses research findings. And the fifth chapter summarises the key research findings and conclusions.

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter sets the scene by giving a broad overview of the study, its research methodology and research question as well as a synopsis of what is covered in the remainder of this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Women's empowerment has a long and rich history: from the times when the role of women was considered as being that of a caregiver, performing domestic chores, to one where today they can hold their own positions in the workplace. Although there are some traditional communities where these backward views are held about women, much has changed in various parts of the world, both developing and developed. Even in countries like China and India where there is preference for boys over girls due to the one child policy in the case of China and the unregulated effort to control population growth in India, this situation is changing (Sen, 1999:106-107 and Guilmoto, 2007:13). Elsewhere, it was general practice to prioritise the education of boys as future bearers of the family name over girls who, in many cases, were seen as growing up to marry into other families.

This chapter provides a broad overview of literature covering the historical evolution of feminism; the women empowerment agenda in historical perspective; and how women empowerment theory has evolved over time.

2.2 The history of the evolution of the feminist movement

In all countries, regardless of the economic state of the country, whether the country is developed or developing, gender roles and relationships change gradually over time. More often than not, the society determines gender roles and the roles are conveyed through cultural traditions, beliefs and norms. The societies ascribe gender identities and relationships to people who live in them. The different roles of women and men in their communities, moreover, generate varying needs and concerns (Wehner & Byanyima, 2004:55).

Cultural norms across the globe tend to assign different societal roles to women and men. Culturally, men are expected to do tasks such as building, repairing damaged goods in the house, heading livestock and so forth. Women on the other hand are expected to cook, clean the home, do laundry, and look after children, the sick, disabled and elderly. Even when it comes to inheritances, many traditional societies tend to subscribe to the same mindset. For instance, men would inherit land and property while women would not. Also, men are generally regarded as heads of households and therefore the ones who make decisions in the family as well as in the community (Wehner & Byanyima, 2004:58).

However, these norms and cultural practices are changing and progress continues to be made on various fronts, as in the current practice, women do perform tasks that are culturally seen to be fit for men. Today for instance, women are builders and they are also farmers unlike before where these responsibilities were attributed to men only. Today we see a slow but significant change in this trend. In 2008, for instance, for the first time in its history, the South African Constitutional Court had to deal with a case of disputed chieftaincy. The case was brought by Tinyiko Shilubana whose claim to the throne of chieftaincy of her tribe was denied on the basis of gender. The Constitutional Court after examining the evidence ruled in her favour. Although Chief Shilubana is not the first woman chief in South Africa, her case symbolises the strides made in the fight for gender equality in South Africa.

Similar to the injustices that were happening during the apartheid era in South Africa, so is the gender injustice. During apartheid, blacks did not have access to quality education, land, credit and decision making positions. As a result of this, there is evident inequality between whites and blacks, even though the democratic government has given blacks access to political power. It is not easy to bridge the gap that has been continuously and drastically widened for decades. For many years, women and men have not enjoyed equal rights and

equal access to resources such as education, land, credit and decision making power. As a result, women and girls lag behind men and boys in many ways. Unequal rights, unequal access to resources and the installed societal norms limit women's ability to make decisions in their homes, communities and at the workplace (Wehner & Byanyima, 2004:59).

Undoubtedly, women continue to suffer dire consequences of global mal-development although there are minor differences in the experiences of women in the developing and the developed world. Development policies of many countries continue to ignore the important role of women in the development process. Bhavnani et al (2003:2) argue that "women's contributions and a regard for culture are key elements in a meaningful development that aims to improve living conditions of all people..." Amongst the challenges that are faced by women in the developing world are poverty, unemployment, limited or no access to land, manifold social discrimination and violence. Women in general, especially those from disadvantaged contexts confront their challenging situations with amazing resilience.

Approaching this debate from a social justice perspective, Amartya Sen (1999: 189) argues that active agency of women cannot function properly without being concerned with inequalities that blight women's well-being. According to Sen, social justice is at the centre of problems of gender inequality. If the nation is determined to address key social problems such as eradicating poverty, one of the important starting points should be to eliminate gender inequality. Gender equality has also been held back by resistance of individuals, families and communities. The general belief that women must be submissive can leave them last in line for education and economic opportunities (UNICEF, 2006:3).

The fight for women's empowerment has been waged for decades. Even before it achieved the status of a global agenda, women have quietly waged struggles for justice in their different corners for many decades. The idea of a global women's

movement is an inevitably controversial topic, argues Antrobus (2004:1). The term global suggests that women across the globe are the same and have the same experiences. The term ignores the fact that there are cultural and contextual differences that are valued by women's movements even within national boundaries. Antrobus (2004:1) posits that "realities of class, race, nationality, ethnicity, geographical location, age, sexual orientation, physical capacity, religion and political affiliation often lead to sharp divisions".

Another important factor that is worthy of consideration in the gender debates is culture. Culture plays a significant part on how gender roles are defined and how gender is perceived and understood within a society (Bhavnani et al, 2003:4). Culture here is seen as a set of relationships that create and challenge inequalities. Nevertheless, the UNICEF argues that no history, legacy, religion or cultural tradition can justify the inequality and disempowerment that exists (UNICEF, 2006:9-10).

Gender equality plays an essential role in creating the world envisaged in the Millennium Declaration signed by World Leaders during the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. This Declaration envisaged "a world of peace, equity, tolerance, security, freedom, respect for the environment and shared responsibility, in which special care and attention is given to the most vulnerable people, especially children" (UNICEF, 2006:2). This means that the international community has pledged to strive for a world not only fit for children but also for women. It was also acknowledged by the World Leaders that gender equality will empower women to conquer poverty, with manifold benefits for their families, communities and various countries. The twentieth century commitments to gender equity encapsulated in the Millennium Declaration must however be understood in historical context.

2.2.1 Shift from marginalisation towards equality

Women's movements have gone through various stages of development from isolated national endeavours to what has become global in character. Antrobus (2004:27) documents the transformation process of women's movement over forty years, which she terms a rich diversity of local movements into an international women's movement and ultimately into a global movement. She argues that women experiences are located within the broader context of global trends and challenges. She further argues that women come to a better understanding of how the social relations of gender are implicated in the systematic crises that have contributed to persistent poverty, social exclusion and alienation, environmental deterioration and the spread of violence that threatens the well-being and security of the majority of the world's people and the planet itself.

To help us understand the evolution of women's movement, Antrobus (2004:28) poses two critical questions: "What were the international forces and trends that led the international community to take interest in the role and status of women, resulting into the declaration of International Women's Year (1975) and the UN Decade for women (1975 – 1985)?; and What was the context in which international women's movement evolved into a global women's movement?". According to Antrobus (2004:31) the decade for women was marked with three themes – equality, development and peace.

These themes were often thought to reflect the interest of three power blocs within the UN – Western democracies, Third world countries, and the Soviet, respectively. The three themes were also consistent with international concern and cooperation between states on issues of equity in development that distinguished the 1970s. Debates on equity and participation took place within the 1970 – 1980 decade. During this period, the UN became the major arena for discussion, also giving voice to G-77 Third World countries. However, the

emergence of conservative governments in the USA and Britain resulted in an abrupt end to all international debates on equity and participation. A macro-economic policy framework was introduced and was adopted as the new framework for development planning.

The origins of the global women's movement, stems from the momentum generated by the UN Decade for Women. It was during this period that women from around the globe encountered each other for the first time in a sustained and ever-deepening process focused on their position and conditions. The decade succeeded in nurturing and expanding the women's movement in a manner that not even its strongest protagonist could have imagined. The decade presented an opportunity for women from communities scattered all over the world to meet not only physically, though this was an important part of it but also to meet at an emotional level as a group of people sharing the same struggles. The women, who participated in the event of the 1975 – 1985 decade for women, came from different racial and ethnic groups, countries, cultures, classes and occupational backgrounds. These women met on constant and continuous basis, "from local to global levels, from the official forums of governmental conferences to the informal gatherings of women in their circles of friendship, religious, political and professional affiliations" (Antrobus, 2004:37).

Back in 1956, the women of South Africa demonstrated tremendous courage, dedication and selflessness when they came together and in one voice presenting a united front against the pass laws. They marched to the Union Buildings, the seat of government in South Africa and in protest, burnt their passes. During the apartheid years in South Africa, all African men were required to carry a pass, which was an identity document for blacks used to identify them and restrict their movement in terms of the Urban Areas Act of 1950. The Act was meant to control the movement of Africans to urban centres. In 1955, a proposed amendment to the Act was tabled, proposing that the pass law be extended to

African women as well, and it was this proposed amendment that women were protesting against (SA History, online).

This amazing act of bravery occurred on the 9th of August 1956, a day which was declared a national holiday and has been celebrated since 1994. More important about this day is that it was not only black African women but women of all races who marched to the Union Buildings to demonstrate their disapproval asking for the withdrawal of the requirement for African women to carry passes and also the repeal of all pass laws. A total of 20 000 women participated in this march. They had a slogan that said, 'Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo', which literally translated, 'if you touch women, you strike a rock' (ANC, online). On this day women had done more than delivering the petition, they had sent a message to the whole world that unjust laws do not intimidate them and will not silence them. They supported each other in an act of solidarity not seen before.

South African women were waging two struggles. It was a struggle for the liberation of all Africans and a struggle for the liberation of women in a male dominated world. Apartheid meant that while the struggles for women are generally shared in South Africa, women found it hard to organise across race lines without the interference of the State. In the months and weeks leading to the 9th of August 1955, women had defied the apartheid restrictions and had organised across racial divides.

Returning to global events, the participation of South African women was curbed by the apartheid regime until liberation in 1994. Until then, the African National Congress (ANC) in exile and its women were the torch bearers of this struggle for women's emancipation.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that the public demonstration of the protest by South African women some two decades early influenced in no small measure the global agenda of the decade for women. The decade for women enabled

women to gain new knowledge and learn from each other's experiences. The organisation of joint projects and collaborative efforts were facilitated by these women. Issue based networks at local, regional and global level, which in turn provided the research and analysis that served to empower women's advocacy, were enhanced during this decade. The decade for women built women's self confidence and developed their leadership skills. In the process, the women's movement transformed itself into a major alternative global political constituency (Antrobus, 2004:37).

It is unfortunate that Antrobus (2004:37) in her otherwise authoritative account does not recognise the efforts of the South African women described above. For example in her account, she suggests that women in the third world countries began to take advantage of the heightened awareness of women's role and status to push forward their agendas for change in the laws and practices that limited their opportunities only after the decade for women. What is beyond question is that the UN decade for women gave impetus to women's movements and catapulted their struggles to a higher level.

In preparation for the 1975 conference, eighteen conference papers were prepared. Amongst the issues that were tackled at the conference was women's reproductivity. Unfortunately, women's reproductivity was not discussed from the angle of socio-economic gains but from the biological point of view once more. Women were seen to be instruments of childbearing and not contributing to the economic wellbeing of their families, communities or countries (Antrobus, 2004:40-41).

A framework for collaborative work that would enable women from different countries and background to respect differences and forge the solidarity that would give birth to a global movement was developed. One of the speakers at the conference, reports Antrobus (2004:42), made a poignant observation that:

The status of women differs significantly from country to country, due to cultural, political, economic and social factors. There are also divergences in the condition of women within countries themselves, particularly between rich and poor, rural and urban, privileged and underprivileged. But ... [there is no] conflict between the prevailing conditions in developing and industrialised countries as regards the aspirations of women for social justice and a better life. In fact, women throughout the world share so many problems that they can and must support and reinforce each other in a joint effort to create a better world.

Amongst other issues that were identified at the conference was the realisation that a major obstacle to improving the status of women depends on public attitudes and values and how the public relate to women holding position of power (Antrobus, 2004:42).

Even though the conference that took place in Mexico may not have met the expectations of women, it was the beginning of a process that was surely to change the lives of many women. The dedication of a decade to women was needed to build and nurture the women's international movement. Indeed the decade made available resources, opportunities and events that made this movement possible. One of the focal themes of the decade for women was the integration of women in development (Razavi and Miller, 1995: 2).

This theme was inspired by Ester Boserup's 1969 study on the invisibility of women's contribution to development. In her study, Boserup argued that women had been marginalised from the process of development in both absolute and relative terms. By absolute she meant women were displaced from their traditional roles and activities; and by relative, she meant that women were not taken into account explicitly in development efforts and not enjoying the presumed gains from development on equal terms as men (Antrobus, 2004:47).

Critiques of Boserup however argued that women’s integration into development exposed them to subordination and exploitation.

Also Boserup was criticised for not challenging what her critiques termed the modernisation paradigm and also for assuming that the capitalist model of development was kind. According to many of the feminists who criticised Boserup, “the problem of women’s subordination required a more fundamental change in the development process, one that tackled the inequalities in the global economic system and focused on changing exploitative class relations as well as women’s subordination” (Antrobus, 2004:48).

Table 2.1: Landmark Events for the Advancement of Women within the United Nations

Year	Event
1946	Establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Branch for the Advancement of Women
1948	Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
1953	Adoption of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women
1957	Adoption of the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women
1962	Adoption of the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages
1967	Approval of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Year	Event
	against Women
1975	International Women's Year, International Women's Day (8 March), World Conference of the International Women's Year (Mexico City)
1976–85	United Nations Decade for Women
1979	Adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
1980	World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women (Copenhagen)
1985	World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women (Nairobi)
1995	Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing)
2000	Beijing +5 (New York)

Source: Science Encyclopedia, online

Table 2.1 above chronicles some important milestones for advancement of women in the United Nations. An influential conference was held in Nairobi during the decade for women, marking the mid-decade. This conference discussed root causes of women's inequality (United Nations, 1985: online). Women's inequality was seen as the result of historical processes – economic,

social, political and cultural – that led to a sexual division of labour based on women's childbearing ability. The fact that women bore children was used to justify confining women to the domestic domain of household. The discussions on women's inequality uncovered the tension between advocacy for women's equality and the fear that women's advancement through socio-economic development and legislative change may do away with cultural values. Antrobus argues that equality for women is deeply a political issue, especially in many of the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Antrobus, 2004:50).

The view that the equality for women is a political issue is strongly supported in the United Nations text on the Nairobi Conference (United Nations, 1985: online) thus:

The role of women in development is directly related to the goal of comprehensive social and economic development and is fundamental to the development of all societies. Development means total development, including development in the political, economic, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life, as well as the development of the economic and other material resources and the physical, moral, intellectual and cultural growth of human beings. It should be conducive to providing women, particularly those who are poor or destitute, with the necessary means for increasingly claiming, achieving, enjoying and utilising equality of opportunity. More directly, the increasingly successful participation of each woman in societal activities as a legally independent agent will contribute to further recognition in practice of her right to equality. Development also requires a moral dimension to ensure that it is just and responsive to the needs and rights of the individual and that science and technology are applied within a social and economic framework that ensures environmental safety for all life forms on our planet.

Feminism enables one to see the world differently. Antrobus (2004:60) states that “by identifying, as a woman, with the structured marginalisation, powerlessness and alienation of other marginalised groups, feminism provides a window for experiential learning. By asking different questions, feminism enables one to make connections between gender subordination and many of the problems facing the world – violence, poverty, social exclusion. She further states that feminist politics provides a basis for organising for change towards a vision of the world that is equitable, democratic, safe and sustainable.”

The conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 1993 made great strides in ensuring gender justice. It provided a special opportunity for an international women’s movement to insert its concerns into the UN framework. One of the preparations before the conference was the emphasis of the assertion that women’s rights are human rights. This was a campaign that was launched with a worldwide petition, which was circulated late in 1991. One of the demands that were made in this campaign’s petition was that the conference should take women into account with regards to human rights issues in general and that the conference should address violence against women in particular. It is recorded that 250 000 people from 120 countries signed the petition. The campaign had two ways of affirming its presence and demands. The first way was to make known human rights issues to women all over the world. The second way in which the campaign worked was to assist in disseminating information about the Vienna conference (Antrobus, 2004:91-92).

The next major event after the Nairobi Conference took place in Beijing. The Beijing conference in 1995 was a landmark for the women of South Africa. This was the first conference in which they participated as a free nation. In fact this conference catapulted gender issues to a level not known before in South Africa. It can be argued that the content of the gender equality demands in South Africa that found its way into the various policies and legislation drew its inspiration from the Beijing Conference.

There were also organised campaigns that focused on getting the UN to recognise women's rights as human rights. Out of these campaigns, a series of international leadership institutes emerged. These institutes provided opportunities for activists of women and human rights from around the world. These activists were assisted in designing guidelines for the ongoing campaigns to raise women's awareness of their human rights. One of the ways to achieve this was to encourage women to relate to their own experiences of abuse before proceeding to the rights framework. Women from all corners of the globe and from all cultures, races, beliefs and political affiliations participated in refining a women's human rights framework, which gave women a platform to enrich the global advocacy (Antrobus, 2004:92).

This conference on Human Rights had positive outcomes for women because as a result of the conference, a special chapter on women's human rights was included in the programme of action that was adopted by the delegates who attended the conference. Later in the same year, 1993, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The works of women's human rights networks was strengthened in all regions. An assertion that women's rights are human rights, along with economic and social rights, provided a solid foundation for further advocacy by the global women's movement that emerged. "Women's organising around the 1993 International Conference on Human Rights set the stage for broadening of the rights framework that was to prove critical to bringing together traditional women's rights advocates and activists from developing countries who focused on socio-economic issues" (Antrobus, 2004:95).

2.3 The women's empowerment agenda in historical perspective

The gender perspective has provided the building blocks for understanding the reality of the lives of women and the gendered nature of the major processes - economic, social and political – in society (Pearson, 2000:384). There can be no doubt that in recent years there has been heightened awareness of the role of women in the development process. Women are both agents of development as well as beneficiaries. As agents, they bring to the development policy arena a perspective about how to structure development initiatives in ways that bring about greater benefit for all. As beneficiaries, they are unshackled from the unnecessary chores - such as fetching water and wood over long distances and from unsafe sources - that have served to keep women oppressed.

At the same time, the manner in which gender is incorporated into development may be problematic. Pearson (2000:384) argues that mainstreaming gender into development policies has tended to be narrowly interpreted to mean anti-poverty strategies, which focus on poor women. She maintains that there is a need for a broader, critical approach to address the interests of strategic gender and also give an analysis of causes of gender inequality.

Section 2.4 of this chapter analyses how the theories of empowerment that are encapsulated in the various strains of the gender analysis discourse have evolved. The present section builds on the understanding of how women's movements have evolved. It does this by analysing the content of the demands made by women over time as a proxy variable for understanding the evolution of the empowerment discourse. In other words, the question it seeks to ask is whether the content of what women have been fighting for over the past 70 years or so has changed. If it has changed, in what ways has the change happened and what were the factors that drove the change. If it has not changed, what could be the factors that have trapped the development of this discourse?

Pearson (2000:383) poses a rhetorical question about whether the global struggles have been purely driven by notions of sisterhood. She implies that at some point this was the case and asks that if this is no longer the case, what can be made of the enthusiasm for privileging gender in development and analysis? This question warrants a review of the current enthusiasm for mainstreaming gender in policies of development and development institutions on whether they are representing authentic integration of gender analysis in development policies.

To even attempt to answer these questions requires a minor detour which takes us to the history of the international development discourse. Essentially, the development discourse has gone through various stages as has its underlying theories. When colonialism began to collapse as a political process that defined relationships between the industrialised and poor countries, there was a scramble for a new alternative and development became the new orthodoxy.

The theoretical developments to explain this new order went from Rostow's five stages of development theory in the 1950s to the modernisation theories of the 70s, core and periphery theories, to the neoliberal agenda which became the development creed of the 80s and 90s. Central to these theories was an attempt to understand the transition from what was generally referred to as traditional societies which relied heavily on agricultural economies to industrialisation and post-industrial economies. They also sought to explain the differences in the levels of development of various nations, the forces and factors at play.

During this period, another political battle was waged between Western Countries (Europe and North America) and the Soviet Union commonly known as the cold war. This war defined how both parties to it related with what was called the third world countries which had not accepted communism but were at risk of doing so according to the west. This political contest shaped perhaps to the detriment of the poor and women in particular how development was understood. The evolution of women's movements and the empowerment agenda in general

occurred alongside these political developments including the rise of conservative government in Britain and the United States in the late 70s (Kothari & Minogue, 2002:7-13; Cammack, 2002:157-160; Harris, 1992:325; Hewitt, 1992:292; Bernstein, 1992:265-267; Rostow, 1960:4-16).

It is not surprising therefore that it was only after the 70s that women's issues began having an impact on development policies. This coincides with the period of tremendous shifts in political power which culminated in the collapse of communism in the late 80s. However, even after this period, women were still not seen as active participants in the development process. Even worse, they were thought to have been unaffected by strategies of development discussed above (Kothari, 2002:43).

In different parts of the world, such as South Africa, the fight for the recognition of women started much earlier than 1970. In 1946, for instance, the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women was tasked with preparing an internationally binding tool that would protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for women. This resulted in the formation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which the UN General Assembly adopted in 1979. However, despite the fact that it has been 29 years since CEDAW was adopted and that the convention has received 184 ratifications, accessions and successions by parties of the States, millions of women worldwide remain powerless, voiceless and without rights (UNICEF, 2006:1).

This is continuing despite the assertion that "without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives in all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved" (Morna, Undated: 2). This is one of the quotes that were made in the Beijing Platform for Action.

The observation by UNICEF that women remain powerless, voiceless and without rights, suggests that there has been discontinuities in the fights that women have fought over the years. What this means is that while the struggle succeeded in getting states to sign up to CEDAW, they did not follow through to ensure that signatories live up to their commitments. One way of saying this is that they celebrated too early before the full battle was won. A more detailed account of progress made in implementing the global commitments is contained in the Nairobi text (United Nations, 1985: online).

Part of the implementation would require that national legislation is enacted to give effect to the Convention. Not all countries went this far. However, even in countries like South Africa where there is a slew of national legislation that prohibits gender discrimination, there are still women who face serious injustices. This suggests that in some instances the content of the demand is different and in others, it remains the same.

In South Africa and few other countries where there is gender equity legislation, the content of the struggle is different to that of countries such as Afghanistan where there is currently a law being proposed which aims to legalise rape within marriage. Similarly, the famous story of Amina Lawal of Nigeria who in 2002 was nearly stoned to death for committing adultery is further evidence of unevenness in the gains made. Also, Kenya still practices female circumcision, a gross violation of the rights of women. It appears that women have been caught up in the celebrations of the collapse of colonialism and the gains they have made in the global arena around the adoption of binding conventions.

By and large, the content of the gender equity demands has evolved and expanded at least at the global scale. For example, there has been a series of conferences in which women's movements around the world participated. These were conferences on Environment in Rio 1992, Human Rights in Vienna 1993, Population in Cairo 1994, Poverty in Copenhagen 1995, Habitat in Istanbul 1996,

and Food in Rome 1997. Three themes that played out in all these conferences were economic justice, gender justice and political justice (Antrobus, 2004:81). In all these themes, women seemed to establish themselves as they actively participated in debates and discussion.

2.4 Women's empowerment theory in historical perspective

A number of theories exist on central approaches to gender and development. These approaches are often regarded as a reflection of the changing paradigms of feminist convention and development analysis. These include (i) gender and development (GAD); (ii) women in development (WID); (iii) women and development (WAD) and (iv) women, culture, development (WCD). According to Pearson (2002:402), there has been a shift from an emphasis on WID to a broader use of gender analysis, the GAD approach. The implications of the shift from WID to GAD have been illustrated in three policy areas – environmental conservation, structural adjustment, and micro-credit and women's empowerment. Pearson (2000:402) states that in each policy area, WID concentrates on women as traditional environmental managers, and considers them as peculiarly vulnerable to the negative impacts of adjustment, also as appropriate targets for micro-credit interventions because of being more reliable re-payers and more likely to spend increased income on family welfare than any other thing.

In contrast, GAD puts its emphasis on gender relations and treats policy interventions themselves as requiring a gender analysis in order to assess their likely impact. Even though the WID approach was successfully used in the 1970s to attempt to integrate a focus on women in development, in the 1980s, it was criticised for only dealing with women's practical needs and a broader approach, the GAD approach, was recommended based on gender analysis of development policies and processes as well as existing gender roles (Pearson 2000:402).

The GAD approach emerged following the Women in Development; and Women and Development approaches. The GAD approach is the discourse which is currently used by many scholars, policy practitioners, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to discuss the relationship between women's inequality and development processes. The main perspective of GAD is not only to integrate women into development but also to "look for the potential in development initiatives to transform unequal social or gender relations and to empower women" (Bhavnani et al, 2003:5).

Bhavnani et al (2003:4) view the second approach, WID, as pointing to women's invisibility and exclusion from development initiatives and processes. They argue that the WID approach was used to mainstream women in development through arguing that women should be treated equally to men. The WID approach advocated the equity approach, which gained momentum in the 1970s. This approach originates from the experiences and practices of donor nations (Razavi and Miller, 1995: 2).

However, in the mid-1980s, WID shifted its fundamental discourse from equity to anti-poverty and then to efficiency. The anti-poverty discourse was seen as a complimentary tool to basic needs approach to development as it included income generation strategies and skills development for women as part of its solution. The efficiency discourse on the hand, argued that development would become more efficient if women's resources were fully utilised. In other words, the efficiency discourse viewed women's participation in the economy with the same lens as gender equity that development will be better achieved if women are equal to men, which is a view that the World Bank also shares (Bhavnani et al, 2003:5).

The third approach is Women and Development. Kothari (2002:44) refers to WAD as one amongst the three (WAD, GAD, WID) approaches that focused on feminist challenges to key development concepts. The WAD approach according

to Bhavnani et al (2003:5) was theoretically informed by Marxist-feminism, which emerged in the second half of the 1970s. The WAD approach raised critical questions about the WID approach. The argument made by WAD proponents was that women's contributions have always been central to possibilities of development and therefore fundamental question to be asked was why women were excluded from development projects. As a result, the WAD approach did not only focus on the integration of women into development but also on dependence of Third World countries on the richer countries. The WAD approach made the self-organisation of women central to its analysis and practice (Bhavnani et al, 2003:5).

A different and yet insightful argument is made by Kothari (2002:51) about developments in thinking about gender issues that development theory and practice have not yet critically engaged with the arguments of many feminist and postcolonial scholars. Part of the reason for this she argues, is that those who are engaged in development implementation see themselves primarily as practitioners, and consequently has little use for (Meta) theory. Simultaneously, the emphasis on case studies and micro-level social relations and social differentiations makes each case unique and too complex to permit generalisation or construction of concepts that can be broadly applied.

Bhavnani et al (2003:6) argue that all three development approaches "fall short of a larger analysis of the ways in which capitalism, patriarchy and race or ethnicity shape and are shaped by women's subordination and oppression." Further, Bhavnani et al (2003:6) criticise these three development approaches as lacking in addressing or adequately taking into account the issue of culture. Consequently, Bhavnani et al (2003:7) came up with WCD approach which takes as central that production and reproduction are inseparable from the lives of women. The WID approach sees culture as a set of relationships that create and at the same time challenge inequalities. This study is of the view that there is a

need for broader analysis of gender inequality considering all factors that are raised by different authors.

Before going into analysing the gender and development approach, it is necessary to define gender or make distinction between gender and sex in order to provide a conceptual tool that forms the framework of gender and development approach as well as gender analysis. While sex is a natural category reflecting biological difference, gender is a social construction, though often based on biological sex. According to the gender definition, “individuals are born either male or female but over time they acquire a gender identity, that is, what it means to be male or female” (Kothari, 2002:43). Because in particular contexts gender is constructed through social experiences, what it means to be a boy or a girl, a man or a woman differs from one environment or community to another and changes over time. According to Kothari (2002:44), “gender has been largely used to refer to the difference between men’s and women’s roles, interests and needs, and gender relations to the particular power relations embodied in those differences, that is, the inequalities between men and women.”

A similar distinction between sex and gender is also made by UNICEF, where a call for human rights developed into an expedition for gender equality when a distinction was made between sex and gender. Again, sex is described as a biological factor, whereas gender is defined as a social construct that describes what is feminine and what is masculine. Following the realisation that one is not born with gender roles but rather learns them, proponents of gender equality challenged the stereotypes and broad discrimination that disadvantaged women socially and economically. Even though calls for gender equality were made as early as 1948, the cause of women’s rights was not acknowledged in the international agenda until 1974 (UNICEF, 2006).

Both Kothari (2002) and UNICEF (2006) support the notion that gender and development approach focuses more on socially constructed relations between

men and women, rather than making women as their only focus. This approach makes an important recognition, that women and men play different roles within the society and that not all women or all men share the same knowledge and experiences. This stresses the point that there are forms of differentiation in society that mediate an individual's position in society and their experiences. These include age, religion, race, caste, sexuality, disability and tribe (Kothari, 2002:44).

The gender and development approach made demands and requirements towards changing the face of development and the manner in which women were perceived. One of the demands that were made by the gender and development approach was re-examination of the development process taking into consideration that it has affected women and men differently with women being increasingly marginalised (Kothari, 2002:44).

The gender and development approach also required a shift in thinking about 'sexual division of labour' and 'household', which were seen as two misconceptions that policy developers based their development policies on. This approach argued that in order to make women's work noticeable, it was imperative to broaden definitions of work and productive activity – taking into consideration the domestic work that was performed by women. The gender and development approach also challenged the notion that the household was a harmonised unit within which resources were equally shared and behaviour of members was uniform (Kothari, 2002:45).

On the other hand, while from a gender perspective, the necessity to challenge dominant development approaches is unquestionable, the manner in which much of the gender and development discourse is formulated and the way in which women in particular are presented, is seen as problematic in that a strand of power and domination emerges in the very same discourse the approach seeks to challenge by being conscripted into the language it rejects (Kothari, 2002:49).

There remains, therefore, a need to bring together discourses of feminism and post-colonialism that remains partial. It is also increasingly clear that while development studies have roots in a colonial past; the discipline now contains diverse political strands that constitute “conflicting intellectual currents” (Kothari, 2002:50). Additional to this acknowledgement, there is still high level of resistance to women’s rights.

Pearson (2000:386) notes that in many low-income countries, women are often reported as not doing any productive work or as just domestic workers. In fact, Pearson (2000:386) argues that most rural women spend most of their time on a diverse series of activities such as weeding and harvesting, which makes a direct economic contribution to the household income as well as to the local economy. But this act is not given the acknowledgement it deserves.

On the basis of this broad outline of theories on gender and development, a conceptual framework is constructed in the next chapter to assess the South African situation, especially at local government level.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter provides a broad overview of literature covering the historical evolution of feminism; the women empowerment agenda in historical perspective; and how women empowerment theory has evolved over time.

CHAPTER THREE: GENDER EQUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

This section puts the spotlight on the gender equity developments in South Africa. Firstly, a conceptual framework is constructed to focus the analysis of the South African experience. This is followed by an outline of developments in the gender equity arena since liberation and an analysis of how this finds expression in society especially at the lowest level of government.

3.2 Conceptual framework for understanding the South African experience

Drawing on the overview of theories in the gender equity discourse discussed in chapter two, the author deduces a set of key characteristics that a sound approach to gender equity should process. Although ideologically diverse, almost all the different development theories discussed in chapter two address the following issues in various ways, and they constitute a conceptual framework that is applied to the analysis of the South African gender equity programme:

- the idea that gender equality is not only morally correct, it is also just.
- the relationship between women and their own empowerment
- the relationship between women and their oppressors
- the equality of opportunities versus the equality of outcomes
- the role of contextual factors in the advancement of women towards equality.

In relation to the first characteristic, the questions are what is the just way of addressing gender inequality? Is it enough to merely remove gender restrictions and simply let people compete equally? Should those previously oppressed be given preferential treatment in order to close the gap that resulted from the advantages that accrued to those who were not restricted? Can this be achieved without committing an “injustice” against those not previously oppressed by restricting their opportunities? Is it correct to characterise a practice that seeks to level the playing field an injustice?

The relationship between women and their own empowerment is another question that any approach to gender justice should address. The issues here are whether women are seen as central to their own liberation or whether they are considered as victims who can only be liberated by the actions of others. The beliefs held on this issue will by and large determine the content of women empowerment initiatives undertaken.

Similarly, the belief held about women in relation to their oppressors is an important area of theory. The questions here are about the extent to which the liberation of women’s needs may be aided by men. Is it correct to characterise men as oppressors? Or is the real oppressor the set of arrangements in society that result in practices and norms that oppress one section of the population, in this case the women? In this case, who should be target of the fight against the oppression of women? This of course must not be misconstrued to suggest that men play no role in the oppression of women. To the extent that men purposefully act in ways that are unjust against women they should be held accountable.

If gender inequality has deprived women of opportunities that enhance their capability to play certain roles in society, where should the focus of corrective interventions be? For example, the historical gender inequalities deprived women of education opportunities, a situation that renders many women unable to take

up opportunities that gender equity laws have opened up. Should interventions focus on programmes that enhance capabilities, in other words, closing the gap only or should the focus be on the outcomes achieved as a result of removal of gender inequalities? In other words, should outcome targets be the focus or input targets or both? Depending on which view is taken, these important issues can result in policies and programmes that purport to be empowering women when in fact they perpetuate an injustice against them.

Finally, if women have been excluded from certain roles and positions in society and workplaces, what this means is that the systems that operate, the supporting network and conventions followed in those positions are not geared for women. In addition, the beliefs held by those holding positions to which women are now admitted and views in society generally may not always be fully supportive of women. In this instance, should the context be left untouched or should the gender equity programme also address these contextual factors?

These are deep philosophical questions about which volumes are written and there are no single answers to them. The intention is not to go into complicated philosophical debates but to pose these questions as a guiding framework for analysing how South Africa has structured its policies and programmes. This framework is used in chapters three and four, while the final chapter draws on this framework for the final conclusions.

3.3 Overview of gender equality policies and programmes in South Africa

During the apartheid regime, public administration was highly racialised. Workplace facilities, labour division, and structure of power were divided along racial lines. Access to opportunities was limited to White people and White men in particular (Lewins, 2008:14). This left Black people in a disadvantageous position, with no skills and no education or knowledge of the workplace systems.

Of the four racial groups in South Africa, Black people were at the bottom of the pecking order, and women were even worse. Their work was not recognised as a contribution to South African economy but merely as domestic.

When the democratic government came into power in 1994, pieces of legislation (as outlined in chapter one) that sought to make the workplace more democratic and inclusive were passed. The Constitution, which is the Supreme Law of the Country, was the first to address these imbalances of the past. Chapter two of the Constitution includes the Bill of Rights and Section 9(2) – (5) deals with equality provisions as follows:

- (2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.
- (3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.
- (4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection 3. National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.
- (5) Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection 3 is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair.

The EEA is one of the pieces of national legislation contemplated in Section 9(4) of the Constitution. It is one of the principal pieces of legislation designed to reconfigure the workplace by outlawing discrimination and by providing

opportunities to all categories of people who had been previously disadvantaged. Section 6 (1) of the EEA prohibits discrimination and extends the grounds to include HIV status to those identified in the Constitution. In line with the Constitution, the EEA does not consider it unfair discrimination if the discrimination is consistent with the provisions of subsection 9(5) of the Constitution – to address past injustices.

By taking into account race, gender and disability, the EEA is intended to improve the position of all groups with the exception of able white men (Lewins, 2008:14). However, this raised and continues to raise the same question as asked by Beckwith and Jones (1997:10), is the situation rectified by merely removing the shackles and allowing the race to proceed? Or would not justice be done if the previously shackled runner is first allowed to make up for the gap existing due to the shackles, before allowing the previously unshackled runner to continue with the race? This is essentially the question of justice raised earlier in the conceptual framework. In essence, to the extent that the EEA and its related regulations provide for some degree of preferential treatment of the so-called “designated groups” it subscribes to the conception of justice that merely removing obstacles is not enough.

The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides guiding principles to every sphere of government on how to govern public administration in South Africa. These principles include the requirement of a development oriented public administration; providing services impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias; and broad representation of South African people within the public administration. The Constitution goes further to state that broad representation can be achieved by basing employment and personnel management practices on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past (The Constitution, 1996:195(1)). These provisions of the Constitution, while they are not contradictory, suggest that more needs to be done for the previously oppressed groups so that they can gain the abilities on which appointment must

be based. Some of the abilities will be gained through education, provision of opportunities for gaining skills and experience among others.

Even with the backing of the Constitution, the road is still not easy for women senior managers. There are challenges facing black and white women senior managers in South Africa. Cultural differences have a way of influencing individual expectations and assumptions about management. These assumptions and cultural differences also play a role in the manner in which people interact and their behavioural patterns. Another claim is made that management philosophies evolve in harmony with the cultures within which they are active (Booyesen, 2000:22).

The argument is taken further to say that socialised assumptions such as 'white is right' and 'think manager, think male' have marred the context of South African leadership. Additionally, the "leadership picture is made even more complex and biased by the skewness that still exists in the representation of managers in terms of the various population groups and the genders" (Booyesen, 2000:22).

Mojela Louisa, who is Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Whiphold, which is an investment and operating company that is owned and managed by black women who are dedicated to the empowerment of women, is of the same view as Booyesen 2000 that "whilst we may indeed be enjoying an all powerful Constitution, ushered by new democracies in our country, reality tells a different story in countless battles of a more intangible nature in our daily lives – these have to do with cultural and gender-based stereotypes on the necessity and efficacy of women in our broader society" (Mojela, 2006:21). Women are not seen as leaders when they are outside the domestic environment. However, it should be acknowledged that progress has been made. Modern women are increasingly proving that they are more than capable and are up to the task of holding the fort at all levels in the workplace environment (Mojela, 2006:21).

Booyesen (2000:22) also acknowledges that significant progress has been made in ensuring that women have more access to positions of power or management positions in the workplace. Woman managers have become increasingly visible in all countries since the affirmation of women in the 1970s, as explained before. But the numbers of women in these positions do not necessarily mean that they are empowered or that they are actively involved in decision making. Each country, South Africa included, tell a story of patriarchy.

3.4 *Employment equity and affirmative action*

The definitions of the two policies, Employment Equity Act and Affirmation Action Policy, may have different though not contradictory focuses. However, the primary goal for both pieces of legislation is equal opportunity for all regardless of gender, amongst other factors.

3.5 *The Employment Equity Act*

In 1999, the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 was promulgated. The Act focuses on eradicating unfair discrimination of any form when organisations are hiring, promoting, training, remunerating, retrenching, and providing benefits. One of the main purposes of the Act is to accelerate the training and promotion of individuals from previously disadvantaged groups. It can therefore be said that a diverse workforce, which is representative of all South Africans, is the main aim of the Act (Nel, et al, 2005:138).

Equality is a moral idea that states that people who are in similar situations, should be treated the same. Viewed from a different angle, the notion of equality suggests that people who are not in similar situations should not be treated the same. There is inherent unfairness in treating unequal people equally (Nel, et al, 2005:138). The very notion of equality begs a question of how do we measure

equality for the purpose of implementing the Act. Is equality measured at the beginning? In other words, is it about whether people had equal opportunities at birth or at the point of entry into the labour market? The idea of accelerating training opportunities for previously disadvantaged groups needs to take into account that the trainability of individuals depends on the level and quality of education they received.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa aims to create a society that is founded on equality. It demands that the issues of equality be dealt with. In the first section of the Constitution, it is stipulated that achievement of equality is one of the values that form basis of the South African state. Section 9 of the Constitution further “protects the right to equality and enshrines the constitutional guarantee that the law will protect and benefit people equally and prohibit unfair discrimination” (Nel, et al, 2005:139). According to the definition given in Section 9(2), equality is defined as full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. Also in Section 9(2), provision is made for legislative measure to be put in place in an attempt to protect and or advance categories of people who have been disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. The Employment Equity Act is such a legislative measure contemplated in the Constitution.

It is through the full implementation of EEA that many women will be given an opportunity they never had before. However this does not mean that women will be given jobs by virtue of being women, they need to qualify for the jobs that they are expected to occupy. Section 15(1) of the EEA puts this clearly as it states that affirmative action measures are measures that are designed to make sure that equal employment opportunities are afforded to suitably qualified people from designated groups. The Section further states that these designated groups should be equally represented in all levels in the workforce of the designated employer. Further, affirmative action measures should be designed in a manner that protects and advances people who were disadvantaged by unfair discrimination in the past (Nel, et al, 2005:140-141). In other words, the core of

affirmative action is to give preference to previously disadvantaged people. Race, gender and disability are the grounds of this preferential treatment.

3.6 Affirmative action

The interpretations of affirmative action policy provisions in South Africa tend to raise emotions. There are those who consider affirmative action as a reverse discrimination, discriminating against those who were previously preferred and advantaging those who were previously discriminated against. Nel et al (2005:140) argue persuasively that, “affirmative action should not be construed as an exception to the right to equality, but rather as a means of achieving equality as understood in its substantive or restitutionary sense” (Nel, et al, 2005:,140). In other words, programmes or measures of affirmative action should not be seen as limitations or exceptions to the right to equality, instead they should be seen as essential and integral part of achieving equality.

Thomas (1996:5) refers to affirmative action as a means of correcting the injustices of the past and also an attempt to level the playing field where every citizen can compete on equal grounds. Charlton and Van Niekerk (1994:xviii) defines affirmative action as a policy that gives preferences and putting right what was previously wrong, unfair and unjust.

It is important to get the chronological order of these important legislative provisions. The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service was published in the same year that the Constitution was adopted. The White Paper (1996:53) defines affirmative action as laws, programmes or activities designed to redress the past imbalances and to ameliorate the conditions of individuals and groups who have been disadvantaged on the grounds of race and gender. The Employment Equity Act and the Affirmative Action policy are means fine-graining the analysis and giving traction to the Constitutional and White Paper provisions.

Addressing the questions of justice that are central to equality provisions in the Constitution, EEA and Affirmative Action policy, Beckwith and Jones (1997:10), pose fundamental questions in respect of redressing the past and giving people equal opportunity thus:

Imagine a hundred yard dash in which one of the two runners has his legs shackled together. He has progressed ten yards, while the unshackled runner has gone fifty yards. How do they rectify the situation? Do they merely remove the shackles and allow the race to proceed? Then they could say that "equal opportunity" now prevailed. But one of the runners would still be forty yards ahead of the other. Would it not be better part of justice to allow the previously shackled runner to make up the forty yard gap; or to start the race all over again? That would be affirmative action towards equity.

How possible is it to start the race all over again? Can one take away from Whites the education that they received during the apartheid years that Blacks were denied? Can the work experience that White people acquired over these years, while the Black people were not afforded the opportunity, be taken away? It is impossible to turn back the clock and do what is suggested by these questions.

What of the people who insist that affirmative action is unjust and should be done away with as it is seen to be discriminating against White people, especially White males? Why is it that the measures to undo the past injustices are seen to be discriminatory instead of remedial? Can this be so because a Black person, a Black woman to be specific, is still not seen fit to occupy senior positions in the workplace? This confirms the observation in the National Gender Policy Framework that a broader transformation of government and society is necessary in order for the objective of equality to be achieved (see discussion in the next section).

Mello (2000:32) is one of the people who are critical of affirmative action as he states that the aims of affirmative action may appear as redressing past wrongs but this is done in an unqualified fashion since merits and competences are not kept in mind when putting the policy principles into practice. It is however worth re-stating Section 15(1) of the 1998 EEA that the employment equity policies are put into implementation based on experience and qualifications of individuals. One cannot however deny the corruption that takes place in the workplace. But this should not be associated with the principles of the enacted policies and should be dealt with separately.

3.7 Overview of progress in implementing gender equity in the public service

It is important to start by briefly outlining what has been done at national level of government. Government regards the issue of gender equity as of utmost importance in developing the country. Gender equality in the public services has been included as one of the strategic items that are in the Programme of Action of Government, with the aim of achieving 50/50 representation of women and men at senior management level.

In December 1999, women in senior management level in the public service made up only 17 percent. This percentage has increased over the years. In 2005, the percentage went up to 31.3 percent. The graph below illustrates this increase versus that of men in the public service (DPSA, 2008b).

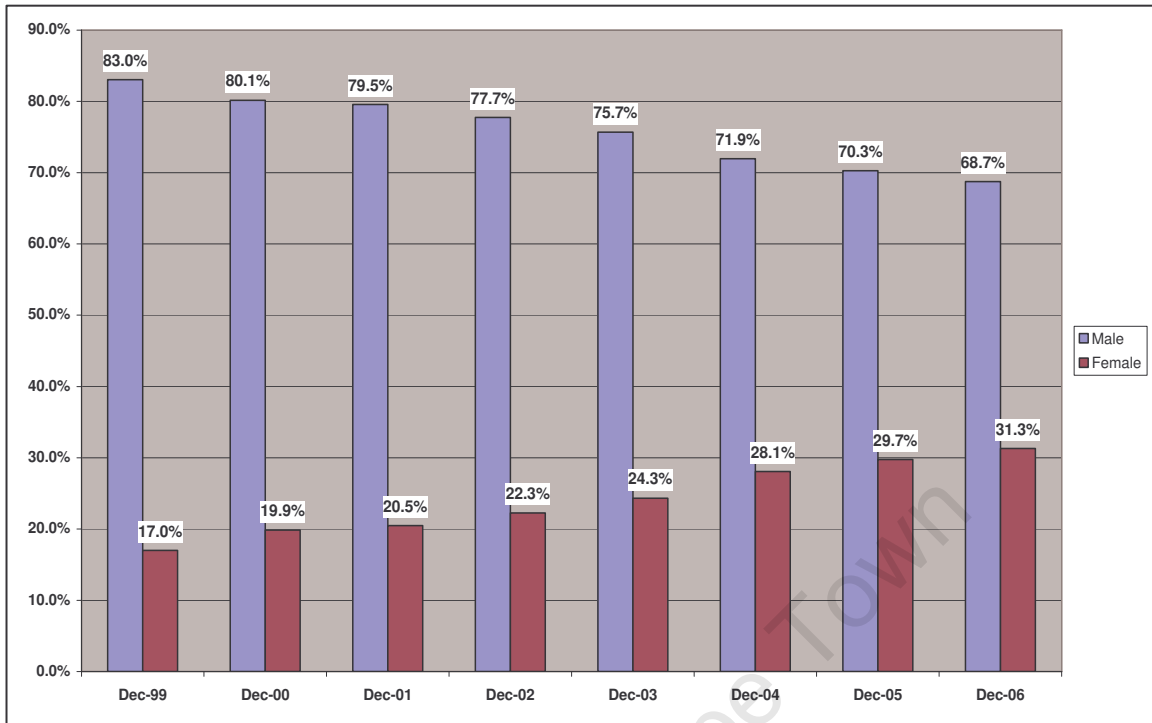


Figure 3.1: Senior Management Statistics, 1999 – 2006

By September 2008, the proportion of female senior managers had increased to 34 percent. This shows a very slow pace towards meeting the 50/50 target, which was set for March 2009. As at February 2009, this figure had only gone up by 0.3 percent to 34.3 percent of women in Senior Management Services (Presidency, 2009). Despite this slow progress, government has interventions in place to fast-track the empowerment of women in all three spheres of government. For example, the Department of Public Service has developed a Gender Equality Framework that is aimed at accelerating the achievement of the 50/50 target.

The National Gender Machinery is also one of the institutional arrangements that are in place in order to effect the commitment of mainstreaming women in the public service. Additional to the Machinery, The Presidency established the Office of the Status of Women whose responsibility is mainly to make the government work for women by holding government to the obligations it has set for itself under the Constitution. The Office on the Status of Women (OSW) has developed South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment

and Gender Equality. The National Policy Framework was adopted by Cabinet in 2000 (Bentley, 2004:5).

Section 4.2.3 of the National Policy Framework argues that "the shift from inequality to equality requires the transformation of government and civil society." (NPF, 2000). Implicit in this statement is recognition that for equality to take place, contextual factors need to be taken into account and dismantle cultural practices that deprive women of their freedom of choice and also put them in vulnerable positions. These practices include virginity testing, polygamy, abduction of girls by older men to marry, restriction of rights of women to occupy certain positions and receive certain inheritances. Legislation is one way of dismantling these practices but attitudes cannot be legislated and require a different approach. It is this different approach that has not fully taken root. While there are institutions such as the Commission for Gender Equality established by the Constitution to promote and protect the right to equality, the Constitution also recognises the right to practice culture and tradition. In the South African context, traditional leaders are major custodians of culture and tradition.

Despite these national institutional arrangements that guide government on how to give effect to its commitment to mainstream gender in the work place, the challenge of putting into practice employment equity measures remains.

3.8 *Critical analysis of policy implementation challenges*

To appreciate the extent and the nature of the implementation challenges facing the government of South Africa, it is important to reflect back on the research question asked in this study: Have the municipalities met the targets set for gender equality in their employment of senior managers?

The picture that emerges so far is one of extensive progress in so far as enacting legislation and policies that seek to give effect to the commitment towards gender

equality and challenges in implementing the policies. There appears to be an existing gap between the targets that the country has set itself and reality on the ground. Could this existing gap be because there is a shortage of suitable qualified women for senior management positions? Other questions which this situation raises are: were the targets merely aspirational or was it the case of failure to analyse the prevailing conditions that would frustrate the efforts to implement the policies?

There is a need for more scientific and factual writings on women's employment equity in South African to inform future actions. Brynard (2000:165) suggests that even though a remarkable convergence on the critical explanatory variables identified by scholars of policy implementation has been made thus far, a common theory on policy implementation still has to be constructed.

The usefulness of policy is only evident when it is implemented. Therefore the implementation issues cannot be ignored when analysing and assessing the impact of public policy. However, before going to policy implementation, it is important to define policy. Anderson (1997:9) defines policy as "a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or a matter of concern. It focuses on what is actually done instead of what is only proposed or intended, and it differentiates policy from a decision, which is essentially a choice among competing alternatives."

Policy implementation, as argued by Brynard (2000:164), is a very crucial element in the policy making cycle and yet ignored by many policy scientists. Scholars of policy science tend to view policy implementation as something that will happen by itself once policy has been legislated and institutions mandated with administrative authority. Even though this view has been debunked, South Africa is no where near a widely accepted theory with powers that are both predictive and prescriptive. Brynard (2000:164) further argues that there is a need for a common theory of policy implementation to be constructed given that

there is still some confusion about the beginning and the end of implementation and also the number or types of implementation that exists.

Brynard (2000:166) employs a policy implementation definition provided by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975: 447 – 448) thus: “policy implementation encompasses those actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievements of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions.” In simple terms, implementation means to carry out, accomplish, fulfill, produce and complete what has been started or initiated. According to Brynard (2000:166) Van Meter and Van Hon’s definition of implementation provides a clear distinction between the interrelated implementation concepts, performance, and impact and stress. Van Meter and Van Hon observe the different questions asked by impact studies and implementation studies. While impact studies ask “what happened”, implementation studies are concerned about “why did it happen?” (Brynard, 2000:166)

Although attempts at arranging the literature on implementation can be seen as arbitrary, three generations of research into implementation theory have been identified over the last twenty years. The first generation assumed that implementation would happen automatically once the appropriate policies have been proclaimed with authority. This generation of thinking was referred to as classical, with classical view of administration and implementation. The second generation set out to challenge the assumption made by the first generation. The South African experience when it comes to the implementation of policy seems to demonstrate elements of the classical view as well as the alternative view which holds that deliberate effort has to be made to implement policy.

Morna, a gender equity activist working for a South African network called Gender Links provides an interesting take on the South African story. She argues that good governance and gender equity have been at the cutting edge of debates on development over the past decade. She points to empirical research

which shows that both good governance and gender equality are central to development and yet the relationship between the two has only recently begun to be looked at (Morna, Undated:2).

Since the Beijing Conference, she argues, women have been insisting on equality of outcomes, not just equality of opportunity. In 2000, there was a mid-term review of the Beijing conference that was held in New York. In this mid-term review, it was concluded that while there is increasing political commitment to, as well as a growing number of constitutional and legal reforms that are aimed at achieving gender equity, still there are major gender gaps that need to be closed in every sphere of life and in every region of the world, including South Africa. The focus on women's access to structures and processes of governance, as well as participation in these structures, has been sharpened by what Morna terms "de jure" and "de facto" equality. It has become a general understanding that unless women constitute a significant number, at least one third, of those who are in decision making positions, their presence in these positions has a little impact, if at all, on the outcomes of governance (Morna, Undated:2). This view of the extent of representation of women in decision making positions has informed many of the targets around women representation in South Africa and SADC.

The South African government has extended the target to 50% representation of women at senior management levels. The ruling party, the African National Congress also has set itself a similar target in Parliament. There are also efforts to remove institutional barriers that prevent women from being active participants. These barriers include issues such as family unfriendly work practices that do not take into consideration the added responsibilities that women have compared to their male counterparts. These efforts are informed by research evidence that suggests that where women are present in significant numbers and are able to effectively participate in decision making, the result is more socially responsive governance outcomes (Morna, Undated:2).

3.9 Local government

There is a small but growing body of literature on gender and employment equity in the South African workplace. However, there is little that has been published on its implementation in the South African local government. As outlined in chapter one, this study is a contribution towards addressing the knowledge gap about the implementation of gender equality policies especially at local government level. In chapter four the analysis of the implementation of policy at both national and local government using employment data is undertaken.

Local government has put in place special structures to mainstream gender. These include establishment of committees that deal with gender issues; appointment of gender coordinators; establishment of gender forums; putting in place gender policy frameworks within different municipalities; facilitating gender training workshops for both councillors and officials; establishment of gender desk; and placement of gender focal points in different government departments.

Bentley (2004:3) argues that “if local government is to address gender issues seriously, then it is important that municipalities define what they understand gender to mean. Gender issues are central to the task of development and gender equality is a developmental goal on its own. This argument emphasises even more the importance of upholding and putting into practice the principles of gender equality and gender equity.

3.10 Overview of local government changed since the 1990s

Major changes have taken place in the sphere of local government since 1990. A complete redesign of local government was embarked upon. These changes were mainly instituted by the 1996 Constitution of the Republic and the 1998 White Paper on Local Government. The White Paper called for the development of the local sphere and this is a requirement that is currently gradually becoming

understood. As a result, the entire government has made developmental local government a key priority.

The White Paper on Local Government (DoJ&CD, 1998:17) defines developmental local government as a “local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives”. It is thus against this background that the sphere of local government, is reviewed.

When the transition to democracy took place the State inherited a dysfunctional local government system, which was significantly flawed and based on inappropriate jurisdictions, structures and programmes that served the minority. Since 1994, the redesigning of municipal systems and governmental principles intended to promote sustainable development have been the focus (Atkinson, 2002:1).

The IDASA Local Governance Barometer (LGB), which measured sixteen municipalities, indicates that South Africa has made great strides in developing the local sphere of government. However the Barometer also finds that despite progress at institutional level, citizens are increasingly dissatisfied with the quality, quantity and the speed at which the services are provided to them by local government. This is despite the conclusion that was made when a ten year review of local government was conducted, that the South African local government has significantly improved its service delivery. The reason for this appear to be that citizens, generally feel that they are further separated from local government and development initiatives on the one hand, while on the other hand they are less willing to add value to local development through their own initiatives and actions (Memela et al 2008:1). According to Memela et al (2008:1), this situation has features that are unique to South Africa even though the disillusionment by citizens is a global phenomenon.

To counteract this trend, paying more attention to good governance is proposed. “Good governance is both means and an end. It is a means to achieve the goals of human development and it is an end in itself – values, policies and institutions that are governed by human rights principles, that is the equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusiveness, accountability and the rule of law” (Memela, 2008:2). Atkinson (2002:2) on the other hand refers to governance as an environment in which government functions and establishes relationship with outside stakeholders. Both Atkinson’s and Memela’s description of good governance underscores the importance of involving citizens and making them feel their circumstances are improving, the absence of which results in what has become widespread service delivery protests.

In addition to good governance, the White Paper on Local Government proposed developmental local government as the main way of addressing challenges faced by local government. The notion of developmental local government is meant to work together with local communities in search of sustainable ways that can be employed in meeting their needs and improve the quality of their lives (Cashdan, undated:1). In other words, “a development-oriented system of governance is an institutional environment in which government creates the types of relationships with outside stakeholders that encourage those stakeholders to launch and sustain developmental initiatives” (Atkinson, 2002:2).

In terms of the local government legislation, the White Paper, Municipal Structures Act and the Systems Act, local government is recognised as the most important level of government in the overriding purpose of promoting development. There are several key factors upon which the importance of local government is based:

- Local government is intrinsically multi-sectoral: this refers to the sole mandate that local government sphere has to bring together various sectoral issues within one developmental policy, programme or project.

- Local government is closest to the people: The 'closest to the people' phrase has a number of aspects. It may refer to the geographical allocation of municipal offices, which are often geographically situated closer to local residents as compared to other spheres of government. This makes access to government services easier, especially for the poor who have to spend enormous amounts of money on transport costs. The small constituency (compared to public representatives at provincial and national levels) that local councillors have to report to also contributes to the meaning of closest to the people. This allows the local councillors to concentrate on matters that are specifically community oriented. To be more specific, the ward system of representation, unlike the proportional representation found at provincial and national levels, denotes that councillors should attend to the needs and interest of their specific neighbourhoods. The process by which councillors are elected, enforces the level of accountability as the councillors can be removed from the office even before the term is over, if she or he is not performing.
- Spatial dimension of local government: Development theorists and planners have increasingly come to a realisation that development is overwhelmingly labour intensive. Therefore, this means that ongoing involvement of beneficiaries and communities, whether through leadership development, institutional capacity building, public participation in planning and decision making – is essential to real development. The physical accessibility of the local government councillors and officials reaffirms the necessity of putting responsibilities such as outlined above in the agenda of local government (Atkinson, 2002:3).

This clearly indicates the important role that local government has to play within the developmental renaissance that Africa and South Africa has embarked on. It is through the local sphere of government that the country is able to undo the injustices of the past, specifically towards poor people, mainly based in rural

areas. In 1996, when the then Deputy President of the South Africa delivered one of his most famous speeches, I am an African, he was disturbed by poverty that had plagued the continent and South Africa, as a result he referred to it as a 'dismal shame of poverty'. Over the decade, many strides have been taken to alleviate poverty in South Africa and local government is playing a central role in this regard as the poorest of the poor are largely situated in rural areas or homelands.

The service delivery record of local government in South Africa is a mixed one. It is no wonder that local government is experiencing major challenges when it comes to the implementation of the gender equality policy as chapter four will demonstrate.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has used the theories discussed in chapter two to construct a conceptual framework that was subsequently applied to the evaluation of how South Africa has implemented its own policies. The chapter has demonstrated that much work has been done at a legislative and institutional level and some notable progress has been met. A brief overview of the literature and a critical appraisal of the same were provided. This appraisal showed that the implementation of the policies has fallen short of the targets set at a national level. A number of questions were raised about what could be the reasons for the gap between policy and implementation at both national and local spheres of government. The chapter provides no conclusive reasons but indications are that the failure to implement has its roots in the failure to properly analyse the conditions on the ground which would have led to the setting of more achievable objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR: LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT EQUITY STATUS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the statistics on senior management employees of district (inclusive of local municipalities) and metropolitan municipalities in all South African provinces. The six metropolitan municipalities are analysed separately to ensure that they do not distort the results given their size relative to district municipalities. Provincial and national government statistics are used for only comparison purposes and are not the focus of this study.

The statistics used in this chapter were received from the departments of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) for district municipalities, and Public Service and Administration (DPSA) for national and provincial government. The statistics for metropolitan municipalities were sourced directly from each of the metros. The figures provided cover the period up to 30 November 2008 for local government and 30 September 2008 for Provincial and National governments.

In chapter three, reference was made to the percentage of women in senior management positions in the public service. The public service currently refers to national and provincial government and excludes all categories of local government. The evidence presented in chapter three showed that although the situation improved progressively over the years, the target of 50 percent women participation in senior management set for March 2009 had not been met and was missed by a large margin. This chapter analyses the local government sector and compares it to the national picture as well as the picture for each province. As will be demonstrated below, local government also lags behind in

meeting this target and the study makes an attempt at isolating the factors at play.

4.2 Gender Equity Profile of South African District Municipalities by Province

Figure 4.1 below paints a picture of South African district municipalities' senior management gender equity profile. Taken together the district municipalities of the Mpumalanga province are leading with 28 percent of women senior managers, followed by Limpopo (27%) and Eastern Cape (25%). The worst performer is the Western Cape districts with only 8 percent senior managers, followed by the Northern Cape (14%) and North West (17%).

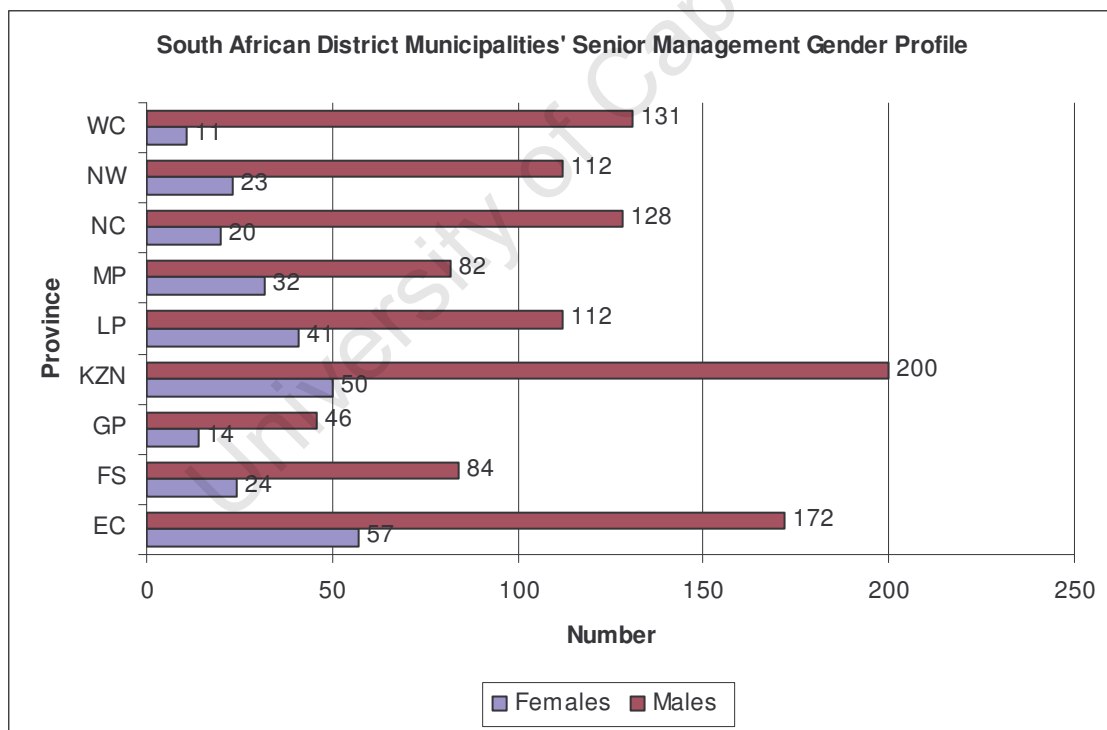


Figure 4.1: South African District Municipalities' Gender Equity Profile of Senior Managers

This provincial aggregate picture masks major differences within provinces as will be shown later. Further it does not show the effect of the relative size of

individual districts and number of districts per province, both of which factors have an influence on the proportions reported above. For example, Gauteng and Mpumalanga have the least number of district municipalities (three in each province).

The data for metropolitan municipalities also make for interesting reading. Table 4.1 shows that the picture for metros is better than that of all districts in each province except in Kwa-Zulu Natal. It should be noted however that the figure for the only metro in Kwa-Zulu Natal is distorted by the different definition of senior management used by metropolitans. For the purpose of this study, the metros were requested to provide employment data of all people who hold positions designated as senior management regardless of comparability of pay scales and the data presented in Table 4.1 is the data that was provided by the metros themselves.

Table 4.1: Total number of Female Senior Managers vs. Male Senior Managers per Metropolitan Municipality

Province	Metropolitan Municipality	No. of female	No. of male	Total	% female managers
Eastern Cape	Nelson Mandela	51	122	173	29%
Gauteng	Ekurhuleni	21	56	77	27%
	City of Tshwane	50	124	174	29%
	City of Johannesburg	108	179	287	38%
Kwa-Zulu Natal	eThekweni	26	108	134	19%
Western Cape	City of Cape Town	121	224	345	35%
Total senior managers in all metros (6)		365	780	1145	32%

The various groupings of government entities namely the national, provincial, district and metropolitan municipality governments have all failed to meet the 50 percent women participation. However, as mentioned earlier, aggregate data masks major differences between these different governments. Metros as a

group are closest to the provincial government group with the latter having 33 percent and the former 32 percent women managers while districts as a group are lagging far behind at 21 percent. The national government group outperforms all others with 36 percent female managers.

When looking within each of these, major differences emerge. For example, there are individual metros with 35 percent (Cape Town) female managers – much higher than the figure for provincial government. Similarly, the City of Johannesburg outperforms the Gauteng provincial government. This serves to confirm that the aggregate figures in each of the categories should be treated with caution as they do not represent all individual government departments or authorities in the given grouping.

It is important to note that, as with the case between metros, grades of the officials are not strictly comparable because senior managers at local government level do not earn the same salary as those who are employed by provincial and national governments. The current legislation does not impose parity requirements when it comes to salaries of government senior managers. This is one of the issues that the Single Public Service Bill seeks to address. Notwithstanding the differences in salaries, these officials are all considered senior managers in these three different spheres. They all occupy positions of decision making and it is for this reason that the three spheres of government are compared in Figure 4.2 below.

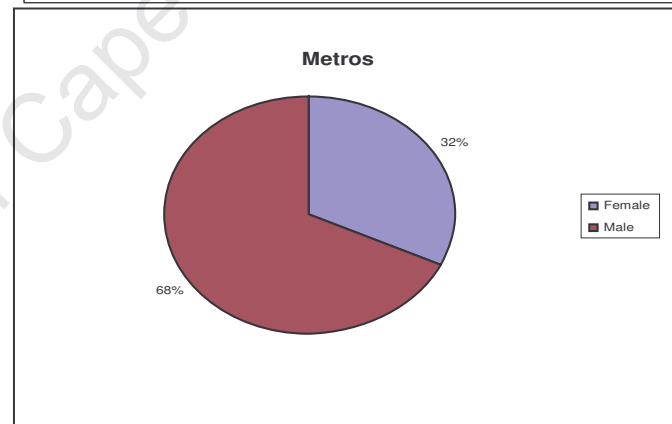
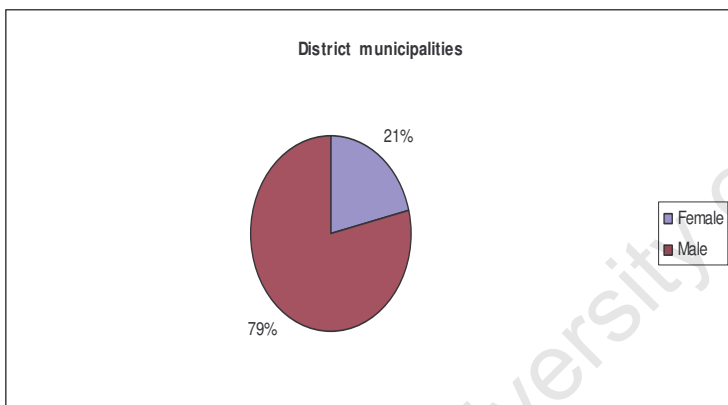
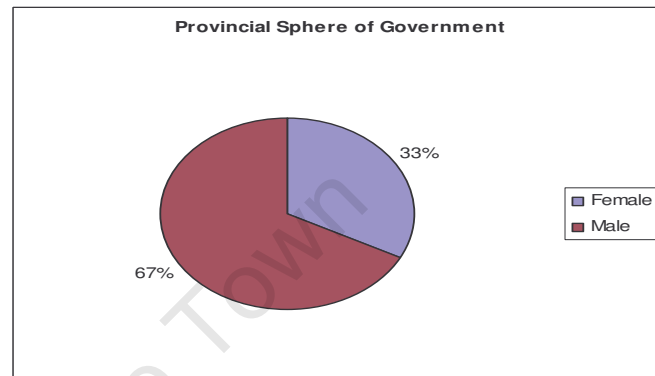
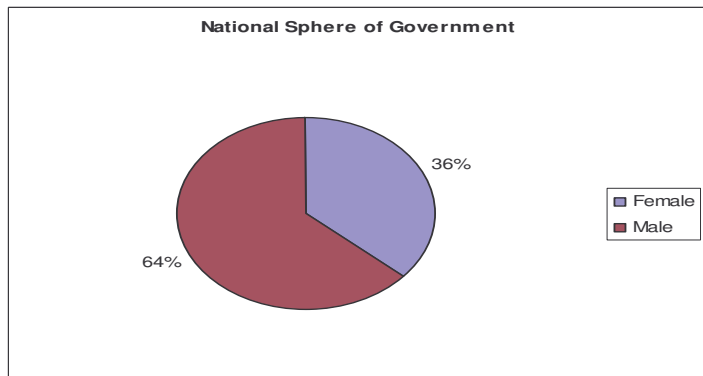


Figure 4.2: South African Government's Gender Equity Profile of Senior Managers

Now, taking a closer look at provincial government as the closest sphere to local government is instructive. As demonstrated in Figure 4.3 below, North West is the leading province in employing women into senior management positions with 36 percent. The percentage of women representation at North West is equal to that of national government. Gauteng provincial government closely follows North West with 35 percent female senior managers. Limpopo province comes third with 34 percent female senior managers. There is a tie between Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal with 33 percent women senior managers. The Eastern Cape and Northern Cape provinces follow with 32 and 31 percent respectively. Western Cape provincial government seems to be doing better than its district municipalities as it has 29 percent of female senior managers but less than its metro which has 35 percent female managers. The province with poorest gender equity is the Free State with 73 percent of its senior management positions filled by men.

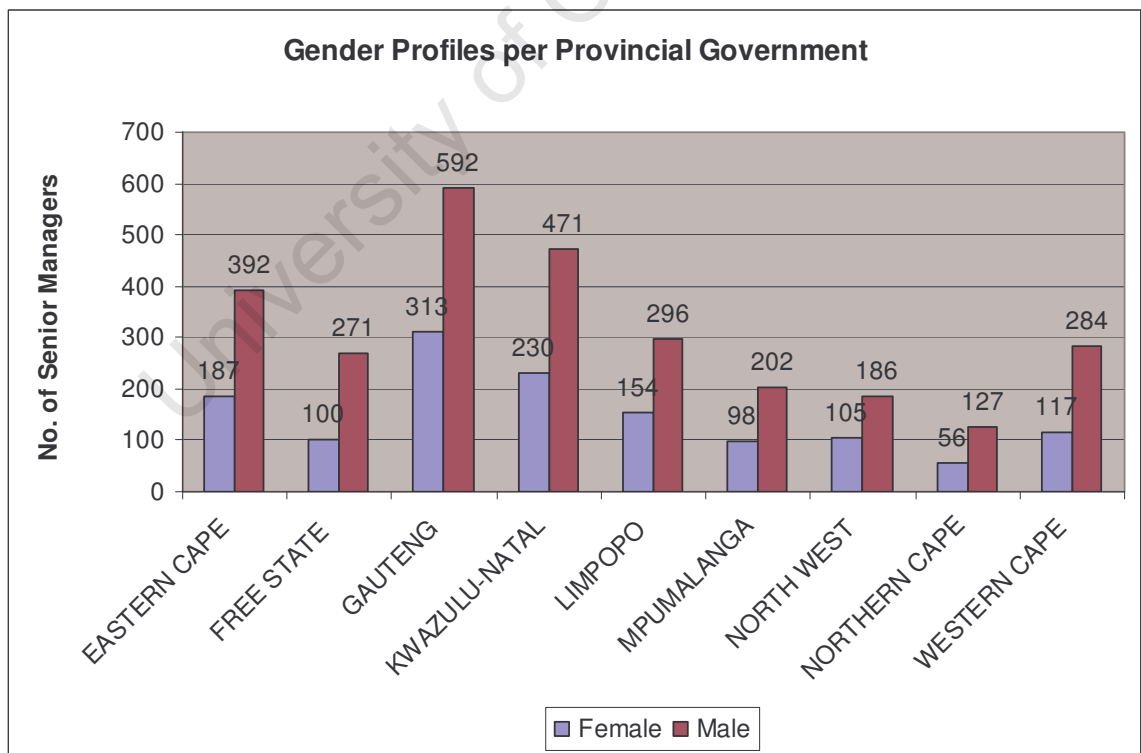


Figure 4.3: Provincial Government's Gender Equity Profile of Senior Managers

On average, as demonstrated in Figure 4.2, provincial government's women representation at senior management level is closely linked to that of national average, with 33 and 36 percent respectively. When comparing local government to either of the two spheres (national and provincial) a different picture emerges that does not have any close ties. Currently, local government has a 20 percent of women who are at senior management level excluding the metros. There are major differences between the different districts as Table 4.2 below demonstrates. Eight district municipalities have more than 30 percent female senior managers, with Alfred Nzo having the highest of all at 40 percent.

University of Cape Town

Table 4.2: Employment of Women in Senior Management in Individual Districts (Percentages)

Categories	0 – 9%	10 - 19%	20 - 29%	30 - 39%	40 - 49%
Districts	Namakwa (0%)	Amajuba (10%)	Frances Baard (20%)	Gert Sibande (30%)	Alfred Nzo (40%)
	Umzinyathi (0%)	Dr Ruth Mompati (11%)	Uthukela (22%)	West Rand (30%)	
	Eden (5%)	Cape Winelands (13)	Umkhanyakude (24%)	Zululand (30%)	
	Overberg (5%)	Lejweleputswa (13%)	Uthungulu (24%)	Amathole (31%)	
	Pixley kaSeme (5%)	Motheo (15%)	Ngaka Modiri Molema (25%)	Kgalakgadi (31%)	
	West Coast (5%)	Siyanda (15%)	Ukhahlamba (25%)	Sekhukhune (33)	
	Ilembe (6%)	Dr Kenneth Kaunda (16%)	Vhembe (26%)	Ugu (33%)	
	Metsweding (6%)	Mopani (16%)	eHlanzeni (26%)		
		Chris Hani (16%)	Fezile Dabi (27%)		
		Bojanala (17%)	OR Tambo (28%)		
		Central Karoo (17%)	Nkangala (28%)		
		Sisonke (17%)	Capricorn (29%)		
		Cacadu (19%)	Xhariep (29%)		
		Umgungundlovu (19%)	Sedibeng (29%)		
		Thabo Mofutshanyane (29%)			
		Waterberg (29%)			
Total per category	8	14	16	7	1
% per Category	17%	30%	35%	15%	2%

4.3 Comparison of District Municipalities within a Province and Provincial Governments

This section compares the percentages of female representation of the collective district municipalities within a province with that of the provincial government. Although there is 13 percent difference between the proportions of senior managers at district and provincial governments, as mentioned earlier there are differences within each group.

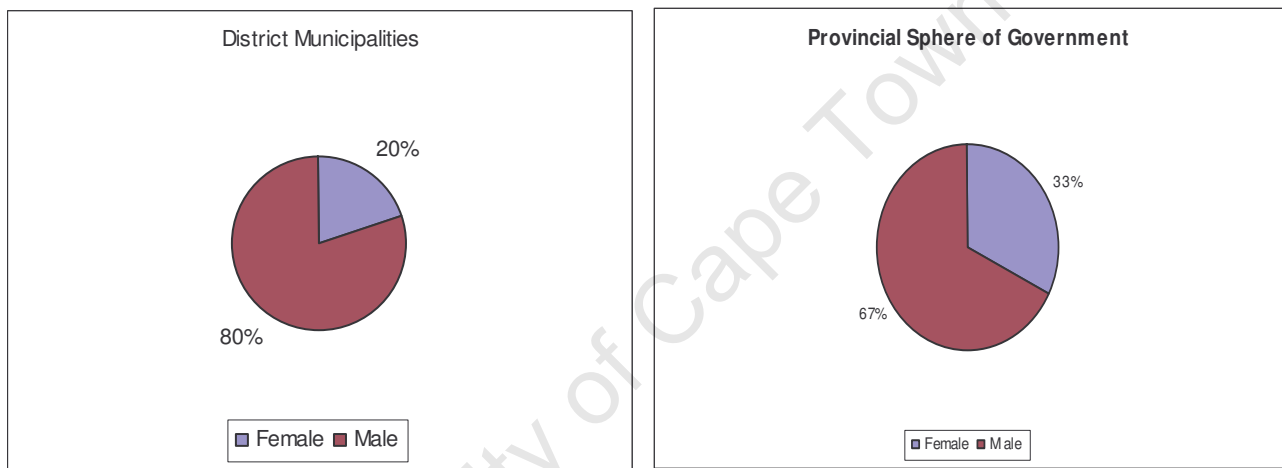


Figure 4.4: Comparing percentage of Senior Managers at Local Government with those employed by Provincial Government

Figure 4.4 above depicts the overall percentages of district municipalities as defined in this study and provincial sphere of government, which are 20 percent and 33 percent respectively. Vast difference in percentage terms is seen between the provincial governments and local governments of North West, Northern Cape and Western Cape.

The North West government doubles the number of women employed in its district municipalities as senior managers (36% vs. 17%). The same applies to Northern Cape provincial government and its district municipalities with 31 percent and 14 percent respectively. The Western Cape is the worst scenario with the province tripling the percentage of women employed in senior

management positions by the Western Cape's district municipalities. This reflects badly on Western Cape district municipalities that it does not apply the principles of employment equity when employing senior managers. Women in the Western Cape's district municipalities consist of only 8 percent of senior managers while the provincial government of the same province boasts 29 percent, and City of Cape Town, 35 percent.

Looking at other provinces, the difference between female senior managers employed by provincial government compared to district municipalities of the same province in percentage terms is between 5 percent and 7 percent for Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and Free State. This means that district municipalities in these four provinces are doing better than districts situated in the Western Cape, Northern Cape and North West, in relation to their provincial governments. The question is why?

Overall, there is a significant gap between the provincial government sphere and that of local government in employing women into senior management. Figure 4.4 clearly depicts this gap. The same gap is seen between the district municipal governments and national government. Figure 4.5 below portrays this gap, with local government having 20/80 representation, while national government has 36/64 gender representation.

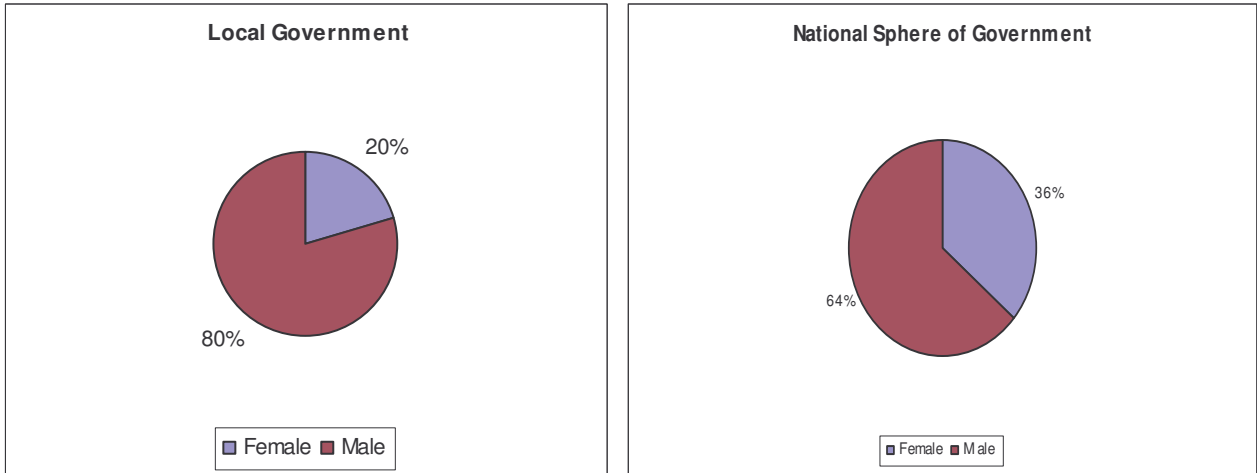


Figure 4.5: Comparing percentage of Senior Managers at Local Government with those employed by National Government

A similar pattern to that of local and national government and local and provincial government is seen when comparing local government to the entire public service, the combination of provincial and national governments. Figure 4.6 below depicts a 14 percent difference between local government and the public service. The public service has 34 percent of female senior managers, while local government is at 20 percent.

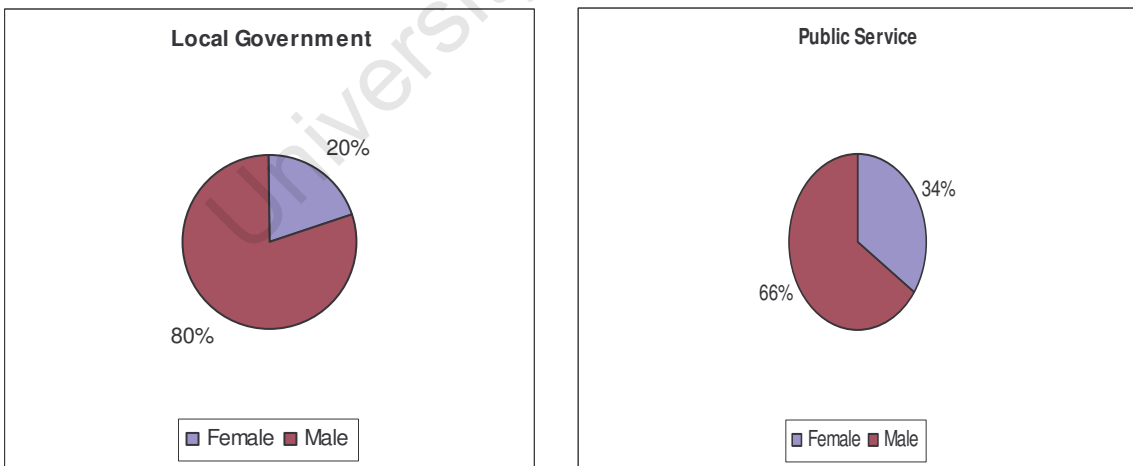


Figure 4.6: Comparing percentages of Senior Managers at Local Government with those employed in the Public Service

Figure 4.6 above is another indicator of non-compliance of local government with Employment Equity Act of 1998. It is of vital importance to examine reasons to

this pattern or behaviour. Could this mean that local government requires its own legislative framework, apart from the national Employment Equity Act, to guide it on issues of employment equity and affirmative action? Or is it the case that there are simply not enough female managers to fill the gap between the current status and the targeted 50 percent? Could other contextual factors be contributing to this situation? For example, could it be that national government appears better able to attract female managers because it generally operates from the capital which is a metro with better living environment?

And similarly provinces operate from metros and other large cities as their head offices? Or is it the case that in addition to the livability of the environment in which national and provinces are located, districts are close to the people and are under pressure from local communities with unchanged attitudes towards accepting female senior managers? Undoubtedly, all of these factors are contributing but the lack of a critical mass of women with sufficient skills and experience to take up the opportunities opened up by the changes in legislation still remains a prominent factor that needs to be researched further in another study that seeks to understand the education component better.

4.4 Critical analysis of local government's employment equity

The Constitution allocates explicit developmental mandate to the sphere of local government. The Constitution does this in the form of developmental objects and duties found in Sections 152 and 153 respectively. This means that local government occupies a unique place in the State. The White Paper on Local Government also identifies developmental local government as a vision for the democratic government. Developmental local government entrusts municipalities with a responsibility of making sure that inequalities within the sphere are addressed. The 46 district municipalities, together with their local municipalities, are expected to provide representative and accountable government to the citizenry. This expectation applies similarly to metros. As McKenzie (2004:14)

observes, “issues of gender are at the core of development” and gender equality is “a developmental objective in its own right” and so local government is expected to prioritise gender equality in the same way they prioritise the delivery of services.

It is true however, that the workplace is no longer exclusive to White people as was the case during apartheid era. Women’s work is now to some extent being recognised as a contribution to the economic gains of this country even though there is still a lack of recognition of unpaid work that is conducted by women. Assuming that all of the questions of living and working environments in districts and lack of critical mass of skilled and experienced women were not a factor it would not be far-fetched to conclude on the basis of the employment statistics that women are not seen as good decision makers, they are not trusted with power and authority, and they are seen as needing men to take decisions for them. Reaching such a conclusion however would be betrayal of the truth in light of the very real skill shortages that the country is experiencing and the fact that women are only now able to access higher education freely.

Since the establishment of district municipalities in 2000, their performance level and characteristics have been difficult to understand. The National Treasury provided a definition which categorised district municipalities by their authority status for water and sanitation. Even though this definition is broadly useful, it is not sufficient for understanding variations found between the districts and why in certain provinces performance is poor and effective in others (DPLG, 2008a:2). In its Municipal Capacity Assessment Report of 2008, the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) noted that “the role of districts in different contexts in South Africa is poorly understood. For example, how does a district in Gauteng or the Western Cape differ from that in the rural Eastern Cape or KwaZulu-Natal areas? The analysis required needs to go much further than the average budget, staffing levels and functions performed to a more nuanced understanding of the

undocumented support provided by districts to local municipalities in areas with limited capacity” (MDB, 2008:111).

The Demarcation Board’s report raises the above question with an aim of arguing that the two-tier system is not effective. But the same question is brought to this study with a different aim, that of arguing that social pressures are a factor in local government. Local government sphere is the sphere that is closest to the people and therefore directly affected by the attitude of the people of the communities it serves. For example, a local government structure that has traditional leaders in its area of jurisdiction will have different challenges compared to the other local government structure that does not have traditional leaders. Using the profile of KwaZulu-Natal district municipalities compared to the provincial government seems to bear this argument out.

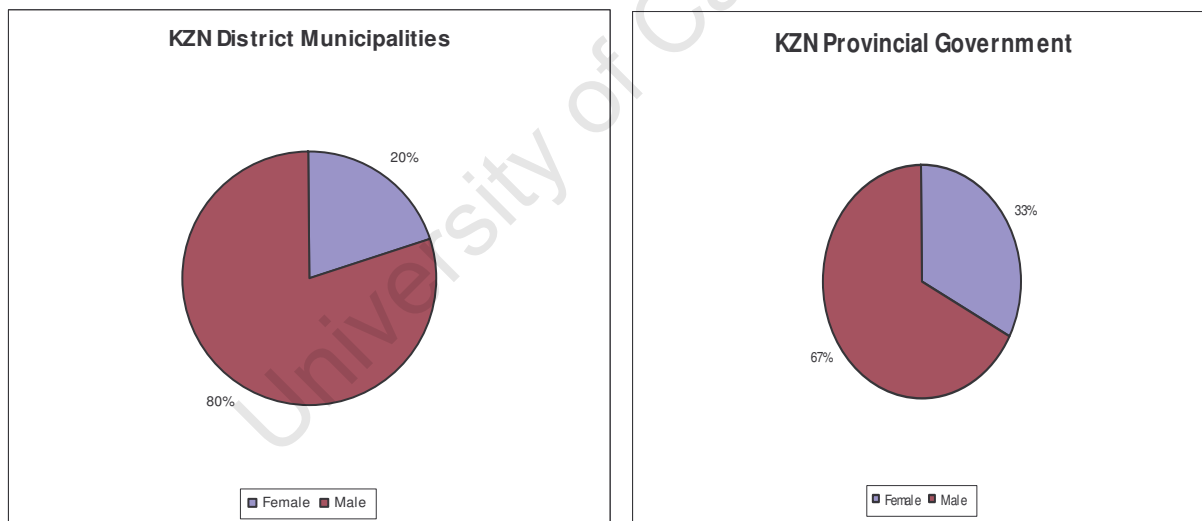


Figure 4.7: Comparing KZN Senior Managers employed by local government vs. KZN Senior Managers employed by Provincial Government

Figure 4.7 above depicts the vast difference between the province and local government in KwaZulu-Natal in upholding the principles of employment equity. The province boasts 33 percent of women appointed at senior management level while the local government only has 20 percent. As it has been argued in the

literature review chapter, the flexibility of women leadership is low within patriarchal structures, and the case of KwaZulu-Natal would appear to suggest that district municipalities of the province are succumbing to the pressure from its surrounding community at large.

Other pressures beyond those referred to above such as political pressures could also be a factor in the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of local government to implement gender equality. Given that only the African National Congress has identified the issue of gender equality as a priority to the extent that it has adopted a policy of gender parity across all its structures, could it be that other political parties hold different views. Should this be true, some district municipalities that are run by other political parties not committed to gender equality would not compare favourably to those run by the ANC.

District municipalities of the Western Cape are better situated to test this argument, as they are in a province governed by the ANC, yet many of them including the City of Cape Town are governed by the DA. Figure 4.8 below shows the enormous difference between the Western Cape's provincial and local governments, with the province tripling the percentage of female senior managers found in its local government structures. However the figures for the City of Cape Town, which are better (35% female senior managers) than those of the province and districts combined, discredit this explanation.

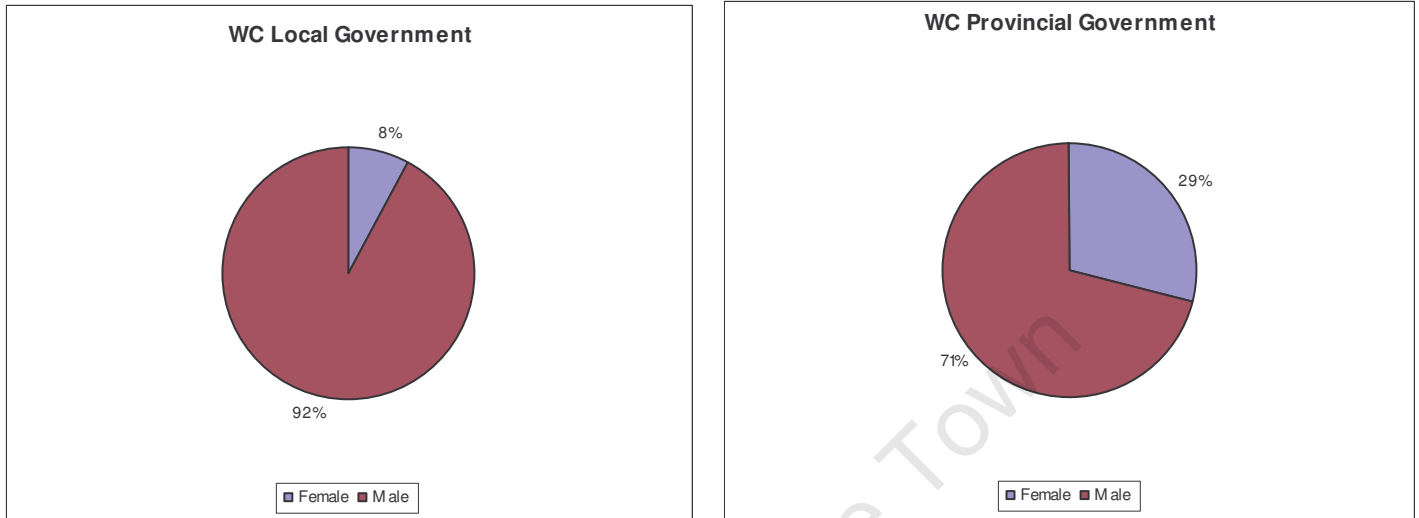


Figure 4.8: Comparing WC Senior Managers employed by local government vs. WC Senior Managers employed by Provincial Government

The province of Mpumalanga on the other hand is one of the provinces where lessons can be drawn. Unfortunately this study was not able to include in-depth interviews to understand the dynamics at play in this province. For example, both the province and the local government within the province are committed to having a gender representative government. The province has 33 percent of female senior managers, while its district municipalities have a total of 28 percent of female senior managers in their employ. Figure 4.9 below illustrates these figures.

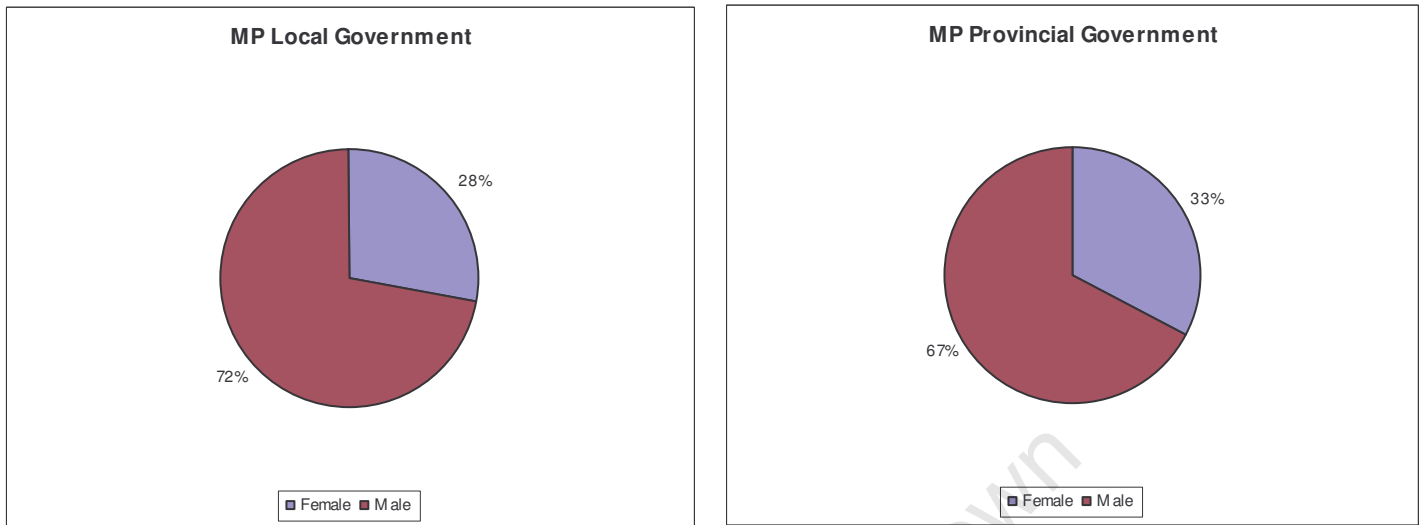


Figure 4.9: Comparing MP Senior Managers employed by local government vs. MP Senior Managers employed by Provincial Government

The Mpumalanga province is predominantly rural with traditional leaders in, some of them paid by government as senior members of the Traditional House. In 2008, the province had a literacy rate of 64 percent, which is below the national average of 72 percent. In 2004, the province was in the top three South African provinces with high poverty rates (DPLG, 2008b:3). These brief demographic attributes illustrate that their success in upholding the principles of Employment Equity Act does not lie in the success or the riches of the province but it lies in other factors. Although all three districts in Mpumalanga operate from larger towns namely, Nelspruit, Secunda and Witbank, their local municipalities operate from much smaller towns that are affected by the problems of unlivable conditions and lack of amenities. The Mpumalanga situation therefore dispels this notion that large towns and cities provide better working conditions for women and therefore they will perform better on gender equity.

4.5 Critical evaluation of the findings

A detailed evaluation of the findings is undertaken in chapter five. Here, reflection is on two key issues: what does the South African gender equality story say about the approach adopted in relation to the conceptual framework adopted in chapter three; and what are the dominant explanations for the failure to achieve gender equality at senior management levels of the state.

Firstly, the analysis of the South African approach to gender equality seems to have addressed all critical aspects identified in the conceptual framework namely: the idea that gender equality is about justice; the relationship between women and their own empowerment; the relationship between women and their oppressors; the equality of opportunities versus the equality of outcomes; the role of contextual factors in the advancement of women towards equality. A brief overview of how each of these is dealt with is given below:

The idea that gender equality is about justice: the whole range of the legislation that has been put in place is based on the notion of correcting the injustices of the past. The legislation prohibits all forms of discrimination unless it is in line with the objectives of correcting the wrongs of the past. Even in such a case, those previously disadvantaged are only given preferential treatment if they are suitably qualified for the jobs.

The relationship between women and their own empowerment and their oppressors: The approach adopted in the legislation and programmes of government is that women are not hapless victims but they are central to the efforts aimed at their own empowerment. Yet those who were previously advantaged are not seen as enemies who must be the target of the women's fight for equality. The idea of training, mentoring and support is entrenched in legislation and policy and men are partners in this process.

Equality of opportunities versus equality of outcomes: The approach adopted by the South African government seems to place a great deal of focus on the equality of outcomes, hence the targets of women in senior positions, rather than opportunities. These should not be seen as mutually exclusive and indeed the South African government has addressed the equality of opportunities by making sure that women access education. But there are not enough programmes that explicitly aim to provide opportunities that enhance the capabilities of women.

The contextual factors: It is true that the workplace is changing to become more inviting to women and supportive of them. At a societal level, the situation seems to be reversed. Women face violence in their homes and communities. It appears that the ambiguous messages sent by government are a contributing factor. At one level government is committed to women's empowerment, and at another it is willing to tolerate institutions such as traditional leaders that do not have a good track record when it comes to women empowerment. Similarly, our laws protect rights to practice culture and demeaning things like polygamy are accepted.

Finally, the dominant explanations for the failure to meet gender equality targets are addressed. A much wider and fuller study would be necessary to qualify these explanations with any degree of confidence. Proffered here are mere indications from the analysis undertaken. There is no evidence that fundamentally there is anything wrong with the existing legislation. Similarly, social and political pressures brought to bear on the appointment of women in senior management positions by those who hold conservative views about women's empowerment, although not excluded; there is no evidence that they are the dominant reasons for the failure of meeting the employment equity targets. For example, all levels have failed to meet the targets and best and worst performers are found in national, provincial, metros and district municipalities. The livability of environments in districts is similarly discredited as there are areas

such as Alfred Nzo which have no urban centre and yet have the highest proportion of women in senior management (40%). On the other hand, the Western Cape district municipalities, which operate within a major centre, are the poorest in employing females in senior management. One of the factors that seem to be prominent is that the government programmes to enhance the capabilities of women to qualify for senior management positions have not delivered to the desired level. Put simply, it seems that among other factors, the education and training factor has not produced enough women with the requisite skills and experience in large numbers to close the gap between policy and implementation.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has analysed the data on percentage of women employed in national government, provincial government, metros and district municipalities. It found that in overall all of these spheres and levels of government have failed to reach the target of 50 percent female senior managers. There are best and worst performers in all these categories or spheres of government which dispels any validity of a conclusion that sees this as a problem of one sphere. The chapter went on to look for reasons for this massive failure. A number of possible reasons are identified and analysed. While all of them are not dismissed as invalid, they are discredited as dominant explanations for this failure to implement the employment equity policy.

CHAPTER FIVE: MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study sets out to answer the research question: Have the municipalities met the targets set for gender equality in their employment of senior managers?

A broad literature review covering theory, international experience of gender equality movements as well as the South African situation was undertaken in chapter two. On the basis of the theoretical literature, a conceptual framework was developed to guide the analysis of the South African situation in chapter three.

The conceptual framework identified five elements that a sound empowerment approach should address: (i) the idea that gender equality is about justice; (ii) the relationship between women and their own empowerment; (iii) the relationship between women and their oppressors; (iv) the equality of opportunities versus the equality of outcomes; (v) the role of contextual factors in the advancement of women towards equality.

Chapter three provided a critical appraisal of the legislation and policies put in place to implement the goals of gender equity in South Africa. While in chapter four an analysis of employment data was undertaken to assess the extent to which targets set have been met.

5.2 Main Findings

The findings are organised around the research question and the elements of the conceptual framework are used to provide reasons. Additional to this, the findings fulfill what was set out in the introduction of this study by looking at possible

reasons for success or failure to meet the set gender equity targets; and also briefly looking at what does the local government performance on employment equity tell us about the character of the 'gap' between policy making and implementation in municipal governance.

Have the municipalities met the targets set for gender equality in their employment of senior managers?

Gender equality targets set for March 2009 were missed by a large margin. National government has so far achieved 36 percent representation of women in senior management. Provincial governments combined have achieved 33 percent and district municipalities (including local municipalities) achieved 20 percent. And, analysed separately, metropolitan municipalities have achieved a 32 percent representation of women in senior management.

What these figures reveal is that the problem is not unique to local government, although some parts of the system are more affected than others. In fact the problem is country-wide and across sectors. Take for instance the current example of South African universities. Out of the 23 South African universities, only two have female Vice-Chancellors. Political parties are not different, out of the 15 parties that are represented in the 2004 – 2009 Parliament, only two as well are led by females. The private sector performs even poorer compared to the public sector. In 2008, a census conducted by the Business Women's Association (BWA) was published.

The BWA study revealed that since 2004, the percentage of women executive managers increased from 14.7 percent to 25.3 percent. In real terms this percentage represents an increase from 739 to 1227. The total number of female directors had also increased from 221 in 2004 to 419 in 2008 or from 7.1 percent to 14.3 percent. The total number of women Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) remains very low. It increased from seven to thirteen CEOs during the same

period. In percentage terms the number of women CEOs increased from 1.9 percent to 3.9 percent. The same can be said about the female Chairs of Boards, which increased from 11 to 13 over the past five years, a 0.9 percent improvement from 3 percent to 3.9 percent of the total Chairs of Boards (BWA, 2008:7).

What are the possible reasons for success or failure to meet the set gender equality targets?

This question takes us to the question about whether the South African approach to empowerment addressed the right things in the right way. Using the conceptual framework the following can be concluded:

- (i) In relation to the addressing gender equality as a matter of justice, South Africa has paid particular attention to this issue. The whole range of legislation that has been put in place since 1994 is based on the objective of correcting the injustices of the past. And gender equality ranks are among the issues of justices targeted.
- (ii) In so far as understanding the relationship between women and their own empowerment and their oppressors, the legislation takes the correct approach which is that women are not hapless victims but they are central to the efforts aimed at their own empowerment. Those who were previously advantaged are not seen as enemies who must be the target of the women's fight for equality. The idea of training, mentoring and support is entrenched in legislation and policy and men are considered partners in this process. It seems that in the implementation of these well and carefully crafted policies the original aims have been missed.

One of the most prominent women of South Africa, Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, who made history when she became the first woman and also the first black Vice Chancellor of University of Cape Town, which was a purely white institution during the apartheid years, gives guidance on the issue of transformation. In her book, *Laying Ghosts to Rest*, Ramphele gives a number of considerations that need to be borne in mind when undertaking transformation programmes. One of these, which is more relevant to this study, is that the country cannot immediately have the desired equity in the high skills employment arena while in the past it did not invest in the development of these high skills among all groups of the population. Equity in high-skilled positions, such as senior management positions, will have to be established over time (Ramphele, 2008:87).

She identifies what she terms “dilemmas of transformation” one of which is the need to lay to rest the ghost of sexism. She is however quick to say that this should not be interpreted as simply replacing white men who dominated the public sector with women, mainly black. She states that “skills inherited from the apartheid era represent investments made by all taxpayers (willingly or unwillingly) and should be harvested to improve delivery of essential public services and South Africa’s competitiveness as an economy” (Ramphele, 2008:88). There is some evidence that this is an area that was not well managed during the South African transition.

- (iii) On the question of equality of opportunities versus equality of outcomes, the South African approach as encapsulated in legislation has acknowledged the importance of both but went on to privilege the latter in implementation. The approach adopted by the South African government seems to place a great deal of focus on the equality of outcomes, hence the targets of women in senior positions, rather than

opportunities. The South African government has addressed the equality of opportunities by making sure that women access education at a general level rather than in a targeted manner. As a result, there are not enough programmes that explicitly aim to provide opportunities that enhance the capabilities of women. And this results in the shortage of women with the education, skills and experience that is required in the management positions.

- (iv) Regarding addressing contextual factors that exclude or continue to oppress women, it is true that the workplace is changing and is becoming more inviting to women and supportive of them. At a societal level, the situation seems to be different. Women continue to face violence in their homes and communities. It appears that the ambiguous messages sent by government are a contributing factor. At one level government is committed to women empowerment, and at another it is willing to tolerate institutions such as traditional leaders that do not have a good track record when it comes to women empowerment. Similarly, our laws protect rights to practice culture and demeaning things like polygamy are accepted under this provision.

In addition, it would seem that South Africa has set tight time-frames without the necessary investments in all elements that would facilitate effective implementation of policies. The 50/50 gender representation in government by March 2009 was a good target but the time frames set were unrealistic. Similarly, not enough was done to analyse the extent of the challenge. The failure to invest in the critical building blocks that will ensure realisation of the overall is perhaps one of the biggest failures in this regard.

If South Africa is to solve its gender inequality problems, critical intervention to transform mindsets in society must be undertaken.

South Africa has some of the best policies on employment equity but they remain of symbolic value only unless fully implemented.

What does this performance tell us about the character of the ‘gap’ between policy making and implementation in municipal governance?

The national government has roles and responsibilities with respect to functioning of local government. These include playing a strategic role; providing a legislative framework for local government; providing a framework for municipal capacity and supporting municipalities; providing support for key institutions within local government; and providing local government with finances. All these roles and responsibilities are resonant with the upliftment of gender equity at local government level (Chipkin & Mafunisa, 2005:6).

National government has a responsibility of ensuring that the local government “operates within the enabling framework and it is structured and capacitated in a way that best enables it to promote the development of citizens, local communities and the nation” (Chipkin & Mafunisa, 2005:6). The national government also has a responsibility of providing a legislative framework for local government. This is a responsibility that national government has performed well on. Specifically to gender issues, the national government has put in place legislative frameworks that guide local government on how to put into effect the implementation of gender equity in municipalities. The Constitution as an overarching national framework provides guidance on how to tackle the issues of gender equality. However, the implementation of these policies and frameworks as well as their monitoring, is a far cry from the desirable level.

It is important to note that national government also has a responsibility of ensuring that adequate capacity is created at local government. However, more often than not, a cry for capacity from local government is made. This is despite the Constitutional mandate that national and provincial governments should

support and strengthen capacity of municipalities. The facilitation of capacity would allow municipalities to manage their own affairs and perform their functions in an expected manner (Chipkin & Mafunisa, 2005:6). This is also despite the interventions such as Siyenza Manje, Project Consolidate and the Five Year Strategic Agenda for Local Government that the national government has put in place in a quest to assist municipalities improve their capacity levels.

One of the compelling diagnoses of problems at local government level suggest that the transformation process following the Local Government White Paper of 1998 focused on structures and systems rather than real capacity to implement. Therefore the failure to meet the target of 50/50 at both national and local government is as much about failure to implement policies as it is about the shortage of skills. The gap between policy and implementation is widened when energy is channeled towards ineffectual things.

5.3 Thesis summary

This study has analysed literature covering theoretical, historical and empirical studies on women empowerment as well the data on percentage of women employed in national government, provincial government, metros and district municipalities. The research question that the study sought to answer looked at whether local government has met its gender equity targets in senior management positions.

The study found overwhelmingly that all spheres and levels of government have failed to reach the target of 50 percent representation of women in senior management positions. It also found that there are best and worst performers in all spheres and categories which dispels any validity of a conclusion that sees this as a problem of one sphere, in this case local government. The study went on to look for reasons for this policy failure. A number of possible reasons were

identified and analysed. While all of them are not dismissed as invalid, they are discredited as dominant explanations for this failure to implement policy.

Among these possible reasons is the lack of critical mass of women in South Africa with requisite education, skills and experience that are required for senior management positions. Should this be proven to be true, it would imply that although the South African approach has addressed all items identified in the conceptual framework, the path chosen has been less successful. However, such a mono-casual explanation is unlikely to suffice as variation among government spheres and districts suggests that certain districts are performing better than others despite facing the same overall national shortfall. The possibility of lack of critical mass is an important factor which requires further research to establish whether it is true or not. Clearly this study was not about assessing the qualifications of women but the extent to which government adheres to employment equity requirements.

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