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**THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN
POST-REVOLUTIONARY
RECONSTRUCTION:
Women in Higher Education Administration**

FOREWORD

The Human Resources Research Centre (HRRC), which is based in the University of Zimbabwe's Faculty of Education, opened in January 1988. The HRRC's decision to initiate a Working Papers series was based on the realization that there is a dearth of published research and policy-related material focusing on the special needs of sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, there are relatively few materials available for instructional use in post-graduate training programmes in the region.

Papers in this series are intended to disseminate preliminary research findings, to stimulate thought and policy dialogue and to provide instructional materials for use in post-graduate programmes. The series includes works which, in the opinion of the HRRC Editorial Board, contribute significantly to the state of knowledge about human resources issues. Working Papers are widely circulated in Zimbabwe and the sub-Saharan region. Items in the series are selected by the Editorial Board. The contents of individual papers do not necessarily reflect the positions or opinions of either the University or the HRRC.

The role of women in all aspects of Africa's economy is recognized to be of enormous importance. Ms R B Gaidzanwa contributes to this information base with her incisive study of women in educational administration. This paper traces the history of African education through the colonial and post-colonial eras and examines factors which influence women's participation in administrative posts.

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Victor Levine
HRRC Coordinator
June 1989

THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY RECONSTRUCTION:

Women in Higher Education Administration

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In most post-revolutionary situations, there is a need for reconstruction of institutions and infrastructure that are deemed necessary for the realization of the goals of the post-revolutionary societies. In the SADCC region, struggles for national liberation are taking place in South Africa and Namibia. Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola are engaged in reconstruction after their struggles against colonial regimes. Countries such as Tanzania and Zambia are continually trying to reconstruct their economies that have been stretched by support given to national liberation movements. The attempts at reconstruction are occurring in situations where the current struggles against colonialism and imperialism are intensifying. The potential for regional disruption socially, economically and political increases as these struggles intensify. It is within this context that the experiences of women in higher education administration will be examined. The major case for reference will be that of the University of Zimbabwe. The experiences of women in higher education administration will be

discussed so that their policy implications can be assessed. Where possible, reference will be made to the other SADCC countries for comparative purposes.

Education in the SADCC Countries the Colonial Era

The educational policies of the SADCC countries are influenced by the colonial past of these countries. Formal education in the SADCC countries is mainly due to the penetration of colonialism and capitalism. The colonial educational models for different classes and social strata were applied in the colonised countries. It is important to note that formal education was not available to most people except for small sections of populations in colonised countries. The few who had access to formal education were better placed for access to job opportunities and general social mobility in the colonial societies. Education was therefore a very important resource for those members of the colonised societies who were ambitious. Given that formal education opportunities were scarce and therefore expensive, only those members of the colonized societies who had the cash or labour resources could use the avenue of formal education for their advancement. The families and clans who had contacts with colonial functionaries and missionaries stood a better chance of acquiring formal education. The families were usually those who had converted to Christianity or belonged to elite, royal and elevated families in the traditional social and political structures. They could forfeit the labour of their children because they had access to the labour of their subjects or social and religious subordinates. Thus formal education remained relatively exclusive during the colonial era in the SADCC countries. This is not to say that poorer or non-Christian people amongst the colonized did not have any access to formal education. They could make great sacrifices such as selling livestock and other important assets in order to secure formal education for their children. However, not all the people were in a position to make such sacrifices and this has helped to perpetuate the exclusive nature of formal education in most SADCC countries.

Within these colonised societies, stratification existed by gender. The rich, the Christians and the marginalised could afford to experiment with the new formal education system introduced by the colonial regimes. However, it was not just any child in a family who could be sent to the new schools for formal education. It was mostly the male children who were sent to the new schools. The girls were tailored to suit their roles as wives and mothers in the traditional informal system. It was only later that girls were channelled into another model of the formal education system in order to mould them into wives, mothers and hostesses of the formally educated men.

There was some convergence between the ideas of the colonised and the colonials on the education and roles of women in the SADCC countries. Both the colonials and the colonised stressed the roles of wifehood and motherhood for women. Both stressed the importance of expertise in managing the domestic sphere in the home. In the predominantly patrilineal societies, that is those societies that trace descent through the father's line in Southern Africa, very few women were able to amass property or acquire formal education which would enable them to wield public, social, economic and political power. Only royal or religious specialists who were female had some measure of public power. Formal education was therefore seen as falling outside the realm of the private or household sphere. Formal education often entailed boarding away from the family home since mission or government schools were located at mission stations or in the towns. Female purity of morals, behaviour and ideas could be endangered by letting women leave the natal home to live in strange, and unknown environments. Effectively, formal education remained a male preserve through the colonial period. It is these historical realities that can partly account for the differences in educational opportunities and achievement between men and women in the SADCC countries.

Education in the Post-colonial Era

At independence, SADCC governments have emphasized the importance of formal education for the purpose of developing their countries. Attempts have been made to increase the literacy rates and educational qualifications of the SADCC populations. Part of this process has entailed the democratisation of educational opportunities across gender, race and class boundaries. However, not all the attempts at democratisation have been welcomed particularly by those groups who were privileged during the colonial era. In countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia and Swaziland, the privileged racial and class groups have been partly successful in defending themselves against the forced democratisation of the education system. On the gender front, women have been agitating for increased educational opportunities for girls in order to bring them to par with boys. However, class background continues to play an important role in determining which women will get more of the type of education that can fuel social and economic mobility. The more affluent families can afford to secure the academic and technical education that could guarantee their children, both male and female, the better jobs and life chances. Poorer families often have to choose between children in terms of investment in education. In most countries in the SADCC region, boys often get preference for education particularly at post-primary level. This can partly be explained by the predominance and continued strength of patrilineality in the region. Investment in the education of girls in such systems is risky because girls can be forced to discontinue their education before obtaining a terminal qualification if they get pregnant while at school. Some SADCC countries automatically expel pregnant school girls from school without ensuring that alternative institutions of education are available and affordable. Thus families do not feel sure that they will necessarily recoup their investment in the education of a girl who is likely to get married and therefore go beyond the reach of her family of birth, or fall pregnant without any prospects for completing her education.

It might not necessarily be true that a family can control or have access to the income of an educated son. However, a son perpetuates the family name in the way a female child cannot in a patrilineal system. So the view of families is that the investment in the future of a son cannot be totally fruitless. The result of such perceptions is that fewer women than men get any type of education. There are some exceptions such as Lesotho where in the primary sector, more females than males get primary school education. In general, the females are outnumbered by males and the difference becomes greater the higher up the education system one progresses. This difference creates problems for women where attempts are made to democratise opportunities by gender in higher education.

In the SADCC countries such as Tanzania and Zimbabwe, the post-independence governments have been able to increase literacy substantially. However, disparities by gender and class still persist while in Lesotho and Swaziland, gender differences are much less marked although the literacy rates could be improved further.

Education Versus Other Priorities

All SADCC governments reiterate the importance of literacy and general education for national development. However, investments in education has to compete with other priorities such as health, industry and commerce, housing and agriculture. Given that most SADCC economies are very rudimentary and unsophisticated, the productive bases of these economies are small. Most of these economies do not permit sustained investment in those sectors of economies that do not immediately generate income. Education, health, housing and other services are consumers of income and they cannot be spectacular in their effects in the short-term. After the economic recession of the 1980s, the SADCC economies are experiencing severe problems that are manifesting themselves in high unemployment, poverty, malnutrition and political instability. As a result, emphasis is shifting towards investment in the productive sectors such as commerce and industry. This

shift in investment affects education because it takes money away from education and channels it into other sectors where it is anticipated that profits will be evident in the short term. Whatever investment is left in education has to be allocated on priority basis within the educational sector.

Within the educational sector, reprioritization often has to take place when economic contraction occurs. First, those areas that are seen as non-essential, less important or unproductive receive reduced investment. Primary education is seen as important so this area does not often suffer from cut-backs. Some types of higher education may receive cutbacks, namely arts and humanities. Thus scholarship and training funds in these areas may be reduced drastically. This has happened in those SADCC countries that experience unemployment of post secondary school and post-university students. The arts and humanities are the traditional areas for females in secondary and university education. When these areas are affected by cut backs, the effect is to reduce the life chances and educational opportunities of those females who do manage to proceed beyond primary school level education. Males are also affected but given the differentiation in male and female educational specialization, the females often cannot compete meaningfully in the priority areas of the sciences such as medicine, engineering, pharmacy and agriculture.

The situation in Higher Education Institutions

During the post-independence period institutions of higher education in the SADCC region sought to indigenize their staff in all possible areas. At best, these attempts have had mixed results. In the arts and the social sciences, the attempts to indigenize have been quite successful since these areas are the ones into which blacks went during colonial days. The sciences have not been easy to indigenize because of the shortage of locals trained beyond the graduate level in these areas. Some universities in the SADCC area do not have strong science, medical, agricultural and engineering faculties. As a result, these universities cannot produce local graduates who could form a pool of poten-

tial staff for science faculties. Expatriate staff tend to dominate the science faculties of SADCC universities. It is in this type of scenario that women trying to enter science faculties have to operate. In the first instance, there are very few of them who could work in these areas in high education institutions just as there aren't enough male locals who could fill these posts. The potential pool of females is thus much smaller than that of males and this militates against attempts to discriminate in favour of women in these scientific areas.

Thus in these areas, it can be difficult to attempt to indigenize in favour of women at two levels. When economic conditions are unfavourable to investment in higher education, the "softer" areas such as arts and social sciences feel the pinch more intensely than the "harder" sciences. At sectoral level in education, those areas in which women are traditionally more strongly represented are the first to suffer cut-backs in spending. As a result, women are virtually out of the running in those areas that do increase or maintain their level of educational investment.

Given the difficulty of entry by women into scientific areas, the discussion of the experiences of women in educational administration will necessarily focus on those areas where women have been recruited, namely, the arts and social sciences. In this discussion, issues of entry, ability and prospects for women in education administration will be considered. The context and conditions of entry into education administration will be outlined. This will make it possible to assess the policy implications of women's participation in education administration in the SADCC area. Hopefully, this will go some way towards indicating areas where intervention may be desirable and where it is not appropriate.

Changes in the University of Zimbabwe after Independence

The context within which women operate in higher education administration has been outlined in the previous section of this paper. A particular case will help to illustrate some of the generalisations made in the paper more specifically.

At independence, a lot of Zimbabweans came back from abroad in order to go into jobs in the public and private sectors both of which were trying to indigenize their staff. The openings that were created in the sector attracted staff from a variety of institutions. The University experienced some staff losses when lectures and administrators left to join the public and private sectors. The losses were made up for by the influx of other Zimbabweans who were coming up through the University system and from overseas. This atmosphere created chances for women to join the University's academic and administrative staff in increasing numbers. Before that, there were some women in academia and administration but most of them tended to be at fairly junior levels in the University system. The most senior women were on the academic side and they were mostly white. Only in the late seventies did relatively young black women begin to enter the University's academic and administrative bureaucracy. In these instances, the academic women tended to hold temporary or short term full-time positions while the administrators held more permanent positions.

At independence, the University of Zimbabwe decided to localize and indigenize its staff and this was done through changes in the legal instruments governing the University. There was some departure from the British system that had characterized the colonial university structure. At departmental level, there was a separation of the professorship from the headship so that a professor in a department did not necessarily become the head or chair of the department for administrative purposes. Thus professorship is solely an academic achievement which might not be coupled with the headship of a department. This move was

supported by younger, predominantly male black staff who were keen to get ahead of the university system. They saw the new structure as offering possibilities for exercising administrative power and influence in departmental government. It was possible for younger male staff to chair departments even though they might not be professors. At that time, there were few women, blacks in particular, in tenured positions in the liberal arts and social studies faculties. Most of the new chairmen of departments were indeed males who were chosen through consultation within departments.

A development that accompanied these changes was the increased emphasis on academic achievement for the purposes of promotion. The possibility of achieving professorship, associate professorship or senior lectureship through academic striving coupled with administrative service provided an incentive for the younger staff to conduct research and take up administrative duties. In the first run of younger, local departmental administrators who were academics, men were in the majority. At that time, the recruitment and appointments of young black women improved somewhat especially in the social sciences. This was due to the fact that vacancies were being created by black young men who were leaving to join government and the private sector. Those disciplines that provided "flexible" staff who could be absorbed elsewhere were the ones that lost staff. The disparities in salaries between university, government and the private sector were disadvantageous to the university and this led to the retention of staff in those disciplines which were the least marketable outside the university. Of course, it is also true that some academic staff who genuinely preferred academic careers over other careers remained at the university. It is within this context that administration at departmental level took place at independence.

Similar changes were experienced in the administrative side of the whole university. Administrators had been predominantly male before independence. After independence, some left to join the private sector since remuneration was higher there and

prospects for upward mobility within the university were not as favourable. Female administrators began to enter the university at general, and faculty administrative levels. This was partly due to the fact that black women had difficulties in finding administrative jobs particularly in the private sector. The university provided an atmosphere and opportunities for female administrators with a little experience to join. Nevertheless, the higher levels of university administration remained male dominated for historical reasons that have been outlined earlier in this paper.

Experiences of Administration at Departmental Level

The experiences of younger academics with departmental administration have been interesting in that they indicate the problems that were resolved by the restructuring of university government and indicate new areas in which conflict has arisen between the old and the new structures. In the first instance, departmental boards have greater responsibility in decision making and implementation since there is a chair of the department who is expected to represent the consensus of the board. This situation is subtly different from that pertaining when there was a professor and head of department who was both the academic and administrative head of a department. Thus the chairperson of any department is not a permanent appointee but can serve for three years in the first instance. Thus every member of the board of a department can with time, chair the department if there is a board consensus supporting it. This effectively consolidated the power of any departmental board.

In the first few years after independence chairpersons of departmental boards had to spend time learning the rules of the university at every level of the system. Most of the chairpersons had no prior administrative experience and had to learn as they administered departments. The university increased its student intake dramatically particularly in the arts and social science faculties. This obviously thrust a greater administrative burden on the new departmental chairpersons who had very little ex-

perience in administration. Thus the new chairpersons had to run bigger departments than those that had been run by the old professors and heads of department prior to independence. The eighties also experienced economic strictures which affected the university. Thus staffing of departments did not grow to keep pace with the student numbers. The bureaucratic requirements of the university took up a lot of administrative time so that the chairpersons of departments found themselves devoting lots of time to meetings, correspondence and other activities that competed for their time with academic commitments such as research and publishing. The emphasis on academic achievement in promotions also caused conflicts for academics who are also departmental chairpersons since they are expected to excel in both areas. The time taken by administration simply made it difficult for chairpersons to research and publish at the same rate as their non-chaircounterparts.

This conflict obviously had various implications for academics in departmental administration. The first possibility was for academics who chaired departments to devote more time to administration and do it properly while forfeiting or endangering their promotion possibilities. Administrative excellence without academic backing cannot be defended for promotion purposes in cases where staff are employed primarily as academics. The second possibility is for chairpersons to concentrate on academic achievement to the detriment of their administrative commitments. This would be a very disquieting scenario simply because it compromises departments which would suffer if not administered properly. The third possibility is for a chairperson to try and carry out both academic and administrative duties conscientiously. This poses problems simply because it implies that a chairperson has to ignore family, leisure and other commitments in order to honour work commitments. There is no guarantee that any individual can balance out two conflicting commitments indefinitely and perform very well in both. It is quite possible that a person can turn out a mediocre performance in both areas and that is not much comfort either. The fourth possibility is for an academic to eschew administrative service altogether. This would probably not go down well with departmental members unless it was

strongly felt that the particular member of department would not benefit the department by serving administratively. There is a fifth possibility which can be considered in this context. This would be to prioritise administrative service according to the career level that a particular staff member is at. This would work in a way that puts the onus of administrative service on the more senior staff members who have achieved some measure of academic achievement in the university system.

The last possibility poses problems for the whole system because it would effectively undo some of the effects that the restructuring at the university sought to achieve. Most of the senior academics are white and/or expatriates and they are the ones who would be in a position to take up administrative duties at departmental level. Given the fact that the colonial regime favoured whites, locally, the resurgence of white influence in departmental structures would be resented by blacks. Apart from the racial implications, there is the cleavage between the senior and junior staff that is predicated on age. Junior staff do resent the traditional age differentiation that is a part of the senior-junior academic relationship. In fact, in some instances, what appears to be a racial divide might be a senior/junior or male/female divide. Which particular divide has primacy depends on the particular circumstances of each department.

The junior academics have had to make choices about when to emphasize academic and administrative duties. There is now a realization of the need to make a conscious choice between the various alternatives and the implications of whatever choices they make. The short-term and the long-term interests of academics have to be assessed within this situation. It is necessary to examine the way in which female academics who have been administrators at departmental level have experienced and resolved the conflicts and problems outlined above.

Female academics in administration

Female academics have begun to feature in departmental administration in the mid-eighties at the University of Zimbabwe. This has been due to several factors namely the feminization of staffing in some departments, the preponderance of expatriates in others as well as preference by departmental boards. It is also salutary to note that the disillusion of black male academics with the choices they have to make in juggling academic and administrative duties may have an effect on the selection of female staff or chairing positions.

The female chairpersons have obviously experienced some of the problems that their male counterparts have encountered. They also experience the conflicts between academic and administrative duties, as well as those between work and other commitments. However, there are other problems which are very specific to female academics who are also administrative functionaries of the University. These problems occur at different stages of a female academic's personal life and academic position. All these areas will be discussed in turn so that the policy implications can be outlined.

Universities in the SADCC countries have been male terrains until the last decade. As a result, women have had to learn to operate in an alien organizational culture with customs, ways of doing things that have to be mastered. Like their male black counterparts in departmental administration, women entered this area with relatively little experience and the additional handicap of being female in a "male" culture and society. Most of the women who were in the universities prior to that were mainly secretaries and clerks to the male academics and administrators. This was certainly the case at the University of Zimbabwe. The first crop of female administrators had to fit into an organizational structure that had not previously experienced females except as secretaries.

An examination of the options open to female academic administrators will be instructive for the purposes of this paper. Those academic administrators who choose to exercise their ability on the administrative side of their duties necessarily have to recognize that they jeopardize their academic career chances in the university. Most of the female academics are in the process of studying for their doctoral qualifications or have recently acquired them. When they concentrate on administration, they cannot consolidate their academic qualifications early in their careers. Academic administrators might not achieve academic excellence on par with their non-teaching, non-administrator counterparts. This would reinforce the view that females do not utilise the chances that they have, that they are not interested in excellence or success in their careers, and if married, that women are suited for and interested in raising children and in looking after husbands than in career advancement.

Those women who choose academic excellence, then have to turn down the offers and chances of teaching and administering their departments in favour of pursuing their chosen goals. This choice is fraught with problems because women who make this choice run the risk of being labelled as selfish and uncooperative in pursuing the interests of their departments. Additionally, such women will be used to "illustrate" that women shirk responsibility and are unwilling to take up challenges when asked to do so. In institutions with a "male" ethos, such choices smack of open defiance and could make life at work a difficult struggle from day to day.

The women who try to maximize both options of administrative and academic achievement take on a very heavy load. Basically, they have to excel in two areas where women are very few and role models are virtually non-existent. Having to excel in two "new" areas simultaneously is very taxing particularly if a woman is married or/and has young children. Generally female academics who have excelled have achieved success late in their lives after they have reared children. Alternatively, they have had unconventional lifestyles and relationships within marriage or

have had to postpone or eschew marriage for career purposes. "Having it all" is very difficult in conventional situations where marriage and career have to be juggled continuously. Often one of the areas has to give way and women may find that their marriages and families crack under the stress of hectic lifestyles. Where the husband also has a career to pursue, the changes that have to be made to accommodate the woman's career may make the marriage well-nigh impossible to maintain in a situation where it is implicitly assumed that the woman's career has to give way to the husband's. Thus the backlash from husbands and children may militate against the female academic administrator pursuing the academic and administrative options in her job. In fact it might be easier for her to pursue the administrative option since this can be fitted into the regular working hours. In the academic stream, a degree of self-exploitation is necessary if one has to pursue conferences, workshops, experiments, reading and writing papers at all hours of the day. Male academics may be able to do this since household responsibilities and duties can be taken over by wives. Women cannot pass on these responsibilities even if they have academic careers. If women tried to do so, they would be labelled bad and inadequate wives and mothers. In any case, it is not easy to find people outside the immediate family to whom such responsibilities can be effectively delegated. Thus a married woman who pursues her career seriously may suffer within marriage and if the marriage breaks up, she is labelled as the breaker of the marriage because she did not curb her ambition for the sake of her husband and children. Her husband may "punish" her psychologically by finding a less accomplished woman as his next wife while the woman herself may feel guilty about breaking out of the stereotyped role of a woman who sacrifices everything for husband and family. Thus in attempting to pursue careers and family interests, the female, married academic administrator may lose most of all the things she values simply because she might be mediocre at all of them. This kind of conflict afflicts women in other fields too.

If a female academic gave up all ambitions in administration, she would be seen as shirking collective duties and generally taking advantage of her colleagues by foisting the onerous administrative departmental tasks onto others. Even assuming that she were able to concentrate on her academic career, she would have to balance it against family commitments particularly if she is married to a husband with career ambitions of his own. If a female academic were single, she would not experience some of the conflicts relating to the process of juggling a career and marriage. However, she still would have to make a choice whether to get married at an early stage in her career and face the problems that married career women experience. Even if she delays marriage, by the time she decides to marry, she would find it difficult to get into a conventional marriage. She would have to alter her personal style and career so that her husband could feel comfortable with her as a wife. It is also possible that some men could accommodate changed relationships in accordance with the career aspirations of academic women.

Possibilities for Improving Job Performance

Given the various possibilities that exist for women in academia, it is necessary to outline several ways for improving performance on the job for those women who may choose academic, administrative or both options in universities. The first thing for women academic administrators to do is to learn the rules and regulations of the institution as thoroughly as possible. This helps when it comes to making decisions and helps assessing possibilities for action on an everyday basis. Rules are important for any functionary who is on alien territory because they can be used for and against the newcomer even if decisions that are being made have nothing to do with the rule book or the job. Females in academia have to master the culture and ways of life of institutions so that they do not send signals that are contrary to what is intended. In spite of the fact that the "normal" allowances will frequently be made for a female who appears to be

lost, people will get impatient and contemptuous of women who appear to be dabbling in a job that could be performed better by a man.

Rules are also an indispensable weapon for fighting against decisions that are guided by gender, racial or other often unspoken prejudice. Any functionary who is in a structure and has handicaps cannot afford to be ignorant of institutional rules and regulations.

Goal setting is also important for anybody who wants to excel in an institutional setup. This is doubly important for females in academia because they cannot afford to dissipate their energies without direction. Most of them face institutional and social obstacles which makes it imperative that efforts be very specifically targeted and fine tuned. Indecisiveness is not very useful in such situations because the initiative can be seized by others. In academic institutions, the bottom line is academic achievement so that any academic female who is involved in administration has to recognize that a timetable and path for academic goal attainment is indispensable. In the long-term, every academic be they male or female, has to be judged on the basis of academic output and quality. In the short-term, administration can be used as a means of gaining certain kinds of experience and knowledge of the institution while recognising that academic excellence cannot be dispensed with. If the administrative route is chosen, in the short term, then planning for achieving academic goals has to be carried out so that the long term academic goals are not unnecessarily jeopardised

The Policy Implications of Women's Involvement in Education Administration

This paper has outlined some of the problem areas which can be addressed in attempts to increase the involvement of women in education administration. These areas can be focused upon for example in attempts to enlarge the potential pool of applicants

for graduate and post-graduate training in the natural sciences. In this area attempts can be made to ensure that there are females who have the requisite science backgrounds at all levels of the educational system. Females could also be appraised of the career possibilities in academia in all disciplines. This can be done through vigorous and well focused career counselling and encouragement.

Once women are in academia, it is necessary to keep track of their career experiences and aspirations in order to form a basis for counselling and encouraging aspiring female academics. Apart from that is necessary to investigate the problems and barriers that female academics in education administration experience. The resolution of these problems can help to improve the career progress of female academic administrators who, at the moment, comprise the role models for the other aspirants behind them. Goal setting by the few female academic administrators can be enhanced by a realistic assessment of the possibilities open to them and the problems that they have to overcome. At present, the networking structures are very rudimentary and often, female academic administrators do not actually have a good idea of what pressures to expect in their new administrative and academic roles. Given that signals are likely to be scrambled in "male" systems, when women are the recipients of the signals, a female academic administrators may feel at sea with regard to what is expected of her, what is acceptable, what is said, what is meant, what to disregard and disbelieve and what to accept or believe.

Often induction procedures for these positions assume that the incumbent is male and as a result the bureaucracy will react to the female academic administrator as if she were male. Thus female academic administrators need to strive to behave effectively in the workplace so that they cannot be ignored or treated with contempt or disregard. This is where knowing the rules and operations of the bureaucracy in which one operated becomes a must. Thus the deployment of energy and efforts in areas where one is likely to be effective is necessary. This implies that female academic administrators need to recognize when

it is not very useful to invest a lot of effort in given circumstances. Careers can be hopelessly derailed by erroneous direction of effort. The point is that one has to invest effort in situations where the chances of success are reasonable. Gambling against all odds can be ruinous and most systems do not accommodate mid-career changes by women as much as they do for men. The cost of such changes can be very high. It is therefore imperative that women in academic administration recognize no-win situations and avoid them rather than gamble and lose heavily without the possibilities for making up for the heavy losses.

With increased agitation for equality of opportunity for all, female academic administrators have to be aware of the challenges facing them and when to take up those challenges and when not to especially in situations where taking up such challenges can lead to disgrace for the women concerned. On the other hand, those women who do not take up the challenges must put all they can into succeeding in order to smoothen the road for those women who will later be assessed on the basis of the performance of their predecessors.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to outline the historical background to education in general in the SADCC countries. The colonial and post colonial situations have been indicated. There was discussion of the effects of the economic recession on educational investment in SADCC economies. The changes that were introduced by post-colonial governments in education were briefly indicated. Specific mention was made of the changes that took place at the University of Zimbabwe and the effects of these changes on academics and administrators were outlined. Experiences of administrators at departmental level were indicated. Specific focus was placed on the experiences of female academic administrators. The possibilities for improving the performance of female academic administrators were indicated. Finally, the paper indicated the policy implications of the involvement of female academics in ad-

ministration in higher education. The discussions raised in this paper could go some way towards pinpointing areas of possible intervention in the future.

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