

## COMMUNITARIANISM AND GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN THE ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

*Social philosophies can act as hindrances to the enactment of different policies. The Zimbabwean government through its different arms has put in place different policies as a response to the United Nations initiatives to close the gender gap in social institutions. This paper argues that the African communitarian philosophy negatively impacts on the entrance rate of female teachers into education management. It discusses gendered realities in the Shona culture in the light of communitarian ethos like egalitarianism, solidarity, security and individual rights and autonomy. The impact of these on the entrance of female teachers into education management is then discussed. This research followed the qualitative research paradigm. Both primary and secondary data were utilised in the research. Secondary data was gathered from existing literature on researches on gender equity in education management in Zimbabwe. Primary data were gathered through semi structured and unstructured interviews. Gaps that need to be filled in advancing gender equality and equity in education management in Zimbabwe were identified. The researchers recommended that there be a redefinition of the concept of egalitarianism, reinterpretation of the communitarian philosophy in a holistic sense and having a renewed vision on women emancipation within the Shona philosophical context to make it more gender inclusive.*

**Key words: communitarianism, African philosophy, gender, gender equity, education management, culture.**

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper interrogates the communitarian philosophy and its impact on entrance of female teachers into education management in Zimbabwe. A study of the Shona culture of Zimbabwe forms the foundation of the study. First, an in-depth discussion of the concept communitarianism is done. The paper then explores the communitarian philosophy in the African as well as Zimbabwean contexts. Implication of the philosophy on the entrance rate of female teachers into education management is then done. Finally a way forward is identified.

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## **2.0 PROBLEM, PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Research has shown that management in education is dominated by men in nearly all countries in the world in spite of the enactment of several policies from global, regional and national levels. This research thus, sought to establish the extent to which the African communitarian philosophy as a core value in the Shona culture affect career aspirations of both male and female teachers and thus affect the implementation of gender sensitive policies in education management. The study was guided by the question: To what extent does the communitarian philosophy in the Shona culture influence career aspirations of male and female teachers?

## **3.0 COMMUNITARIANISM DEFINED**

Communitarianism is a social and political philosophy that emphasizes the importance of community in the functioning of political life, in the analysis and evaluation of political institutions and in understanding human dignity and wellbeing (institute of communitarianism studies, 2000). It emphasizes the responsibility of the individual towards the community. A communitarian ethos encompasses fellow feeling, selflessness, and interdependence, principles of communality, egalitarianism and solidarity. Menkiti Ifeanyi (1984) a Nigerian philosopher argues that communitarianism emphasizes the ontological primacy of the community over the reality of the individual. He says it is the community which defines the individual as a person, not some remote and inert quality of reason. This view of communitarianism assumes that the norms, standards and goals of the community are absolute and the determinants for morality and social justice. One does not focus on oneself as a discrete being but in relation to others. If one does not dedicate oneself to the wellbeing of the community, one purposely causes harm to oneself.

## **4.0 COMMUNITARIANISM IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

African social structures are very communal. Mbiti (1970) in Kunhiyop (2008:21) asserts that:

An individual does not and cannot exist alone. He owes his existence to other people...only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. When he suffers he does not suffer alone, when he rejoices he does not rejoice alone but with his kinsmen. When he marries he is not alone, neither does his wife belong to him alone.

Thus, by African standards the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of the person. Oduyoye (2001) notes that realities in the African system of communitarianism are very community oriented and therefore require all to be sensitive to the wellbeing of the community. The African view of the person can be summed up in the statement "I am because we are and since we are therefore I am." (Mbiti, 1969 in Verhoef and Michel, 1997:17) Chapter two of the African Charter Article 27 (1989) reinforces the moral responsibilities and obligations every individual owes towards one's family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community. The Charter reiterates that the rights and freedoms of each individual shall be exercised with due regard to the rights of others, collective security, morality and common interest. Richardson in Kunhiyop (2008:20) argues that, "community is the central concept in African ethics, the central experience in African morality." Kunhiyop (2008) notes that one's grasp of African morality is dismal if one does not come to terms with the profound concept of community. Thus community is a pre-requisite in African morality.

## 5.0 COMMUNITARIANISM IN THE ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT

In the Zimbabwean context the communitarian philosophy is evident in the language of proverbs widely used by the Shona people who formed the population of this study. Mutswairo, Chiome, Mberi, Masasire and Furusa (1996:83) say,

Shona proverbs are a significant part of Shona culture which is both a product of the active and purposeful productivity of Shona people and a reflection of their ability to be productive and also to understand their social and natural life.

Proverbs are a way the Shona use to communicate about their own world. Mutswairo et al (1996) show that the Shona proverbs:

- Focus on issues of ethical moral significance which are related to the problem of the individual society;
- Affirms definite viewpoints in life and regulates and standardizes the organization of activities of individuals;
- They are the society's way of moulding its members to work towards a common goal and to forge a common purpose;
- They represent the ethos of the Shona society, their tone, character and quality of life;
- They are a set of guiding principles which define the underlying attitude of the Shona people;
- They reflect the Shona's cultural elements and worldview, which give the Shona their philosophy of life; and
- They represent the world in which man, nature and the spiritual world move in step where social organization, social control and moral balance are maintained by clearly defined and subtle protocols of law, custom and ritual.

Mutswairo et al (1996) note that the Shona people use a language, words and expressions which are an image of thoughts, sensations, customs, habits and total experience in the political, social, spiritual, emotional and economic experience. The Shona people emphasize the need to be rooted in one's history, culture and tradition. The researchers identified some of the proverbs upon which the issue of community is premised in the Shona culture. These and many other Shona proverbs and idioms indicate the centrality of community in a person's life.

- *Munhu vanhu* – a person is a person because of other people;
- *Chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda* – one finger cannot crush a louse;
- *Rume rimwe harikombi churu* – one man cannot circle an anthill;
- *Zanondoga akapisa jira* – the one who makes decisions alone burnt his blanket; and
- *Chawawana idya nehama mutorwa anehanganwa* – what you find, eat with your relative for a stranger easily forgets.

It is such proverbs which instil the spirit of community in the Shona people. Their use across generations is a way of passing on well-guarded beliefs and values of the Shona people.

## 6.0 TENETS OF COMMUNITARIANISM AND THE GENDER REALITIES IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

The tenets of communitarianism as highlighted in this paper show that there should be egalitarianism of persons within a communitarian unit. In the communitarian system, the notion of motherhood is not just biological but rather a social obligation. This has an implication on gender sensitive policies as women put their social obligations before career development. Ikuonobe (2006) noted that African communal setup is associated with social responsibilities and expectations which some people see as external impositions that limit one's freedom and autonomy. The division of

labour in the communitarian system is based on the patriarchal system which is a father ruled system in which all power and authority rests in the hands of the male head of the family (Phiri, 2000). As a result there are gender differentiated spaces in a communitarian society. The communitarian system restricts women in terms of freedom to enjoy autonomy and realize their full potential. Benedik et al (2002) point out that women in Africa have largely remained trapped in communitarian structure steeped in tradition where primary allegiance is to the community rather than to the person. Munroe (2001) argues that denying women space freedom stifles their ability, aspirations and dignity. While communitarians say that in this system there is community of persons and egalitarianism, they do not consider gender egalitarianism. Thus women in the African communitarian societies remain in subordinated positions.

## **7.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper is grounded on feminist post-modernism perspective and it explores and describes the effects of communitarian philosophy on effectiveness of gender sensitive policies in education management. Post-modernism is the rejection of the universal and transcendental foundations of knowledge and thought. The main principles of post-modernist feminism which guided this study were:

- proposes a plural understanding of truth that all knowledge is contextual, historical and discursive. it rejects any one truth about reality;
- emphasizes the socio-cultural locatedness of any experience;
- advocates for the creation of self-critical thought and social criticism; and
- emphasizes the significance of language and discourse as they affect individual dispositions (Wanzala, 1998).

This study addressed the research questions from the point of view of participants especially taking cognizance of personal biographies and the cultural context which influence the implementation of gender sensitive policies. Hadebe in Hadebe and Chitando (2009:10) recognise that, “the African context is diverse and that each context has its own particular challenges. Hence it is important to identify and describe oppressive cultural and religious practices in each context.”

## **8.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **8.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Qualitative research was important to this research as it could answer the deep seated question in this research i.e. why is the entrance rate of women into education management insignificant despite the institution of gender sensitive policies? The importance of utilizing qualitative research paradigm in this study was that the researcher utilized participants’ views of their world. This reflects the post modernist feminist perspective used in this study which emphasized the local orientedness of knowledge.

### **8.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Data was collected using interviews, participant observation and critical discourse analysis. Two types of interviewing were used namely unstructured and semi structured interviewing. Triangulation was employed to ensure reliability of findings. The researchers got their data from interviewing both male and female teachers and education managers. The researchers were assisted by assistant researchers to observe activities in 15 sampled schools as they participated in the day to

day activities of the selected schools. CDA was also employed as the researchers participated in the day to day conversations in schools.

## 9.0 FINDINGS

Findings were based on questions asked during interviews, observations and critical discourse analysis.

### 9.1 What are the major communitarian expectations in your community?

Responses varied from different participants. However a synopsis of the findings from this question brought up the following issues: egalitarianism, solidarity, individual security, gendered proximity to power bases and individual rights and autonomy. Although the research found out five areas where communitarian expectations affect female teacher movement into education management, this paper will limit itself to the first three.

#### 9.1.1 Egalitarianism Within The Shona Communitarian Unit

African philosophers claim that African societies are very egalitarian, that is, they place a lot of importance on equality of persons. The researchers went into the field and through observations and information got through interviews produced the following summary:

**Table 1: Gender Based Activities In The Shona Communitarian Unit**

| MALES  | FEMALES  |
|--|--|
| Drink together at beer halls. 'Real' men do not go with their wives at the water hole for it is a women's place.                               | Chat with each other regardless of status at the water hole or the river. Women of virtue are not allowed at the beer hall.                                |
| Help each other with cattle where need be. Have nothing to do with kitchen utensils.   | Lend kitchen utensils to each other. Have nothing to do with cattle.   |
| Can give the other male member maize from the family granary if there is need in a fellow brother's family. The granary belongs to the father. | Poor members can ask for mealie-meal or salt from the next door woman and be given.  |
| Meets during beer drinking. Also meets at sporting functions especially soccer.  | Meets at the gardens, church and at the waterhole.   |
| Discuss social issues at community courts (dare remusha)   | Discuss womanly issues at clubs and the church.  |
| Family issues discussed at family court (dare)   | Discuss issues affecting them as they do their work in the kitchen, during firewood collection or water collection. No formal forum for discussing issues) |
| After court discussions each husband may tell his wife issues discussed for implementation.  | Told what to do as has been discussed at the courts. No inputs, but just implementers of decisions.  |
| A strong man is judged by the extent to which he can control his wife and the women of his household   | A virtuous woman judged by the extent she listens to her husband and instils the same spirit in the children.  |

NB\* Table adapted from Rutoro Ester's doctoral thesis (2012: 188)

It was noted that although there is some form of egalitarianism between members of the same sex there is a definite gender band in equality. There is definitely no egalitarian spirit between the males and the females in the Shona communities studied. Women occupy the area of service provision where they provide their services to make the communitarian unit function. This affects their probability of entering education management as they think more of fulfilling their service roles to the family and to the community.

### 9.1.2 Solidarity Within The Shona Communitarian Unit

It was also concluded that solidarity in the Shona communitarian unit has a gender band. Men mainly act in solidarity with other men where the issue involves a man and a woman. Areas where solidarity of man to man are shown:

- When a man is abusive towards his wife the community mainly put the blame on the woman. They are in solidarity with the man, ignoring the woman's pains.
- If a woman leaves a husband because of varied factors among them abuse, promiscuity and even negligence of the family, the community blames the wife for being a loose woman who leaves her husband to look for other men. They ignore the man's mistakes and put the blame on the woman.

These are negative forms of solidarity which were identified through listening to discourses, observing and interviews. One female teacher said, *'It pains me that whenever there is a problem between me and my husband, the blame is always put on me. It's not surprising because the whole justice system in our community and families is made up of man. Yes, they have to support each other to protect their authority over us. As women we are toothless.'*

Another female teacher reiterated this point by saying, *'What can we women do when we have male judicial systems in our communities? We should expect no justice as such a system just serves the interests of the ruling class- the male class.'* From the above assertions, it was observed that it is clear that solidarity within the Shona communitarian system is extremely gendered. However it was seen that there are instances where if a woman's brothers are near, they will fight for the rights of their sister which is rare when someone is married in an area far away from her maiden home. The implication of this type of solidarity is the isolation of the female within her marital home. This emergent theme on isolation of the female by the marital family due to their solidarity with their son attracted further research. The researcher added another question to the research instrument.

### 9.2 What is the impact of isolation by the marital family on a person?

The responses were varied. Participants cited the following as impacts of isolation by the marital family; stress, fatigue, inadequate sleep, depression, loneliness, suicidal, loss of self confidence and self esteem, lowered self concept, self blame, deterioration of work performance, deterioration of personal relations at work, disempowerment, anger, irritability, loss of concentration and uncertainty of self. All these impacts were cited by women who experienced at one time or another social isolation. One female teacher recounted her ordeal which she was still under during the period of research.

#### ANNA'S CASE

*I feel empty. I have encountered a lot of frustrations in my job as teacher. These frustrations are rooted in my social life which has been hell for me. I got married immediately I completed my Diploma in Education. My husband is a devoted Christian. In the face of the world he is blameless. However living with him has not been as rosy as the world sees it. He is a hard nut to crack. He is so possessive I can't even breathe. He dictates the use of all the money in the home. He abuses me verbally in front of my children and his relatives, he never listens to me. He spends my money on his relatives and leaves me with nothing to meet even my basic needs. I can't concentrate on my work, let alone think of career advancement. What use is career advancement to me when I can't enjoy the fruits of my work? I can't tell anyone because who will ever listen to me when he is such an angel to everyone else except me. He uses my money to gain a name for himself. When I complain to his relative they say I don't want with my money. They have isolated me and I feel empty. No one seems to understand me and I am all alone. I am on the verge of breaking down.*

From the above experience the researcher noted impacts of isolation as; social isolation, mental seclusion, social rejection and an inability to interact with others. The above case depicts someone who has lost all the will to achieve because achievement would bring no personal satisfaction but will be used by the husband as a way of making his own ends meet. For some who have grown up in a system which values communality rather than autonomy being isolated has a greater impact than for someone who grew up in individualistic societies.

On the other hand social isolation and social rejection rarely affect the male teacher. It was noted that the male teacher does not move from his home and relatives upon marriage. Because he is within his kith and kin (brothers, sisters, mother, father and other relatives) they are always in solidarity with him. The result was seen in males having few or no psychological barriers to their advancement. So the psychological stresses associated with social rejection were seen to affect female teachers more than male teachers. This was seen to result in lack of motivation to improve which retards development towards education management.

### **9.3 What implication does non-compliance to the communitarian demands have on a person?**

The responses were varied. The responses showed the following: social isolation, rejection, ignoring the victim in times of want and stigmatization. For fear of lack of future security within the community, the Shona have to comply and conform to social demands of morality and communitarianism. This entails compromising one's possibility of career advancement especially for women. This mainly affects women because of the cultural expectations put on them which they have to fulfil. Society tolerates a male who does not fulfil his obligations more than they understand a woman. So women teachers think more of their future security within their matrimonial homes than do male teachers. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), people have a strong motivation to form and maintain social relationships. One of the central tasks of a person is to obtain social acceptance, and so many people's functions and activities are geared toward promoting that goal.

The research showed that most people respect the communitarian philosophy not because they are comfortable with the system but because of the possible implications of non compliance. In most cases research participants showed that they not only act towards others as they are disposed by their view of them and their personality, but they also act towards them on the basis of what they think will happen on a particular occasion as a result of their behaviour.

## **10.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### ***10.1 IMPLICATIONS OF GENDERED REALITIES OF COMMUNITARIANISM ON GENDER IMPARTIALITY IN THE ZIMBABWEAN EDUCATION SYSTEM***

The above findings are going to be discussed under the following sub-headings; solidarity within the Shona communitarian unit, security within the Shona communitarian unit, egalitarianism within the Shona communitarian unit. Other factors to be discussed are family size, geographical, location, economic status and marital status.

#### **10.1.1 Solidarity Within The Shona Communitarian Unit**

The study revealed that solidarity in the Shona communitarian unit has a gender band. Men principally act in solidarity with other men where the matter involves a man and a woman. Solidarity within the Shona communitarian unit was seen to be prejudiced towards the males within their original families. It was noted that the movement of women from their original families to the marital family affects most women's performance and advancement in their careers. Due to the

inferior position of the daughter-in-law in her marital family and the superior role of her husband within his family, most families act in solidarity with the male rather than the female. The axiom that 'blood is thicker than water' holds firmly in this relationship. Whatever problem a female faces with her husband might be ascribed to her. This may have psychological implications on the woman which in turn affects her work aspirations as one's need to achieve is watered down. It was also observed that the issue of solidarity with males at the expense of the daughter-in-law may lead to social exclusion and emotional isolation. This was seen to have drastic effects on the female teacher whose performance and aspirations are affected due to the psychological impacts of the exclusion and isolation which include depression. Shepherd and Shepherd (1985) assert that depression usually results in negativist attitudes and loss of interest in almost everything. It leads to low self-esteem, poor self-image and pessimistic attitudes. Such attitudes negatively affect career aspirations.

### **10.1.2 Security Within The Shona Communitarian Unit**

It was noted that one of the driving forces behind the insignificant advancement of women in education management is the idea of security within the communitarian unit. For fear of lack of future security within the community, the Shona have to comply and conform to social demands. This entails compromising one's possibility of career advancement especially for women. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), people have a strong motivation to form and maintain social relationships. One of the central tasks of a person is to obtain social acceptance. It was also noted that within the Shona communities studied, the adage 'one good turn deserves another' is central. In Shona they say 'chindiro chinopfumba kunobva chimwe' which means literally that a good action is reciprocated by a good action i.e. from where a good action comes is where other good actions should go. Ikuonobe (2006) argues that although the spirit of community has the advantage of having the butter of the community and an extended family, there are also strings and responsibilities. So for a person to be assured of security within the community in times of want, that person has to work for it. This might even take the form of a sacrifice towards personal growth. The issue of family security for the future is mainly centred on the women as they are the carers. The male teachers are already in their original families where their security is assured but it is the female teacher who is a late comer to the family and community who has to work to gain approval and acceptance. This results in role overload as the female has to fulfil social and professional demands. This again was noted to have repercussions on female teachers' advancement, negatively impacting on the effectiveness of gender sensitive policies in education management.

### **10.1.3 Egalitarianism Within The Shona Communitarian Unit**

Egalitarianism within the Shona communities studied was perceived not to be true egalitarianism. The egalitarianism was understood to be gender specific. It was noted that equality is important to members of the same sex but does not cross sexes. Women are the service providers to the communitarian unit while males are the service recipients which defy the core principles and precepts of egalitarianism. Ikuonobe (2006: 297) says, "some people may object to the communal social responsibilities because such responsibilities are seen as external impositions that limit one's freedom and autonomy." He further goes on to say that some argue that such social responsibilities prevent people from pursuing their life plans and achieving self-realisation. This type of system puts pressure on most woman teachers discouraging them from applying for education management posts which are in themselves too demanding for an already overloaded female.



#### **10.1.4 Individual Rights And Autonomy**

Rights to property were understood to affect motivation to advance. Within the community studied, rights to property are centred on the males. Major assets are ascribed to the male head of the family. The female has only right over kitchen utensils. The major items like the cars, the houses, the cattle and the family homestead are generally in the name of the father. This was noted to affect impetus of most females to advance as in most instances they would not have anything to their names. Another constraint cited by quite a number of female teachers is on the insignificant impact of their advancement to their original families. Whereas the advancement of male teachers benefits their own families, the advancement of a female teacher benefits the marital family. This again was seen to partly affect need for achievement for some female teachers.

Apart from the factors that have been discussed above it was noted that there are other intervening variables on the impact of communitarianism on the advancement of women. These factors determine the extent to which the role of communitarianism is significant in the advancement of women in their careers:

**Economic status of family of origin:** the study found out that the nature of family of origin has a profound effect on ability of males and females to enter education management. It was noted that female teachers more than male teachers from poor families are affected by the communitarian philosophy. In such families the advancement of the male means that he will be able to uplift his younger siblings and the standard of living of the family. The family might take the advancement of the female as a waste of money that could be better used to educate the male's siblings and other family members. This has been noted to be one of the major causes of females lagging behind the males in advancement.

**Geographical location:** it was noted that rural based families have greater communitarian ties than urban based families. Those female teachers married in families who are urban based reported less communitarian hindrances to their professional development. Most teachers from families which are urban based reported that they control their own lives with little or no interference from the extended family. This was reported to be because traditional ties in urban areas are less strict than in the traditional rural communities. It was evident that most of the females who have assumed leadership positions in education are from an urban background where their advancement is not interfered with by family responsibilities. However there are still variations in advancement along gender lines due to factors that have been already mentioned i.e. morality and family care which tend to cut across geographical boundaries.

**Family size:** the study found out that there are greater communitarian responsibilities in larger families than in smaller families. The extent of the large family affects female teachers more than male teachers because of the ethic of care.

**Marital status of a female teacher:** affects the possibility of advancement. It was noted that single female teachers have a greater possibility for advancement than the attached females. This is unlike the males who do better when they have a wife to take care of their daily needs as they concentrate on advancement. Single women do not have any obligation towards a husband so they advance faster than the attached female. They also are not attached to a marital family. A marital family has more force than a maiden family because of lack of blood attachment, cultural expectations of a daughter in law which are at times very confining and payment of lobola.

In line with the above findings, Bondi (1996) notes that women's subordinated positions have reinforced their work orientations. Benedik et al also (2002) argue that traditional expectations of women's roles have an impact on the enjoyment of rights, on equal access to opportunities and resources and to participation in decision making at all levels. However it has been noted that women's experiences differ depending on the country they live, their history, culture and religion. As a matter of fact, Ghafari (2008) notes that in contemporary society, men and women may on the surface seem to enjoy equal rights and responsibilities. However, it is important to understand how culture through its values and practices embedded in particular domains and social institutions fosters inequality.

### **10.2 IMPACTS OF COMMUNITARIAN ETHOS ON ENTRY OF MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS IN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT**

Having grown up within communitarian communities, it was clear that most teachers value the support and blessings of the community before, during and after any advancement. As a result conformity to social norms and philosophies is a pre-requisite of acceptance. Non-conformity was observed to yield social isolation. For one who has grown up in a system which values communality rather than autonomy being isolated has a greater impact than for someone who grew up in individualistic societies. Thus women conform to social standards for them to enjoy security within the male dominated societies which affect their progression in their careers. Isolation can breed stress, depression, loneliness, being suicidal, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, lowered self-concept, self-blame, deterioration of work performance, deterioration of personal relations at work, anger, irritability, loss of concentration and uncertainty of self. All these impacts were cited by women participants who experienced at one time or another social isolation. The extremes of social isolation are that no one in the family feels for the isolated individual even in times of want or happiness. This breeds psychological stress and distress which has an impact on one's performance in her career and lack of will of self-improvement due to mental seclusion. Social isolation can also breed mental seclusion, whereby one shuts him/herself from those around – the person cannot tell anyone his/her problems because she thinks no one will ever listen to her. The research revealed that this form of seclusion is widespread among female teachers. The Shona adage, '*chakafukidzadzimbamatenga*,' meaning that roofs cover what is happening in the house affects female teachers' ability to come out of themselves. This is always said to discourage women from exposing what they experience in their homes. It silences them even if they are under pain and stress. They have to cover up whatever is happening within their homes. This breeds mental seclusion which is further intensified if one is socially isolated. Again this has severe psychological implications which affect work orientations of a person.

Research findings revealed that social isolation and mental seclusion mainly affect the younger female teachers. Interview results as well as findings from observations revealed that the older female has more freedom and greater independence than the younger, recently married female. Female teachers mainly showed that the early years of marriage can be very stressful so much so that the female teacher may not concentrate on her advancement. However as the females adapt into their marital home their authority also grows and they become more submerged into the family. Hence it was agreed that older female teachers face less hindrance to advancement in their profession than the younger female teachers. On the contrary it was noted that marriage releases the male teacher from moral and communitarian obligations. This is in agreement with Eitzer (1998: 403) who argues that, "the responsibility of women for domestic maintenance and children frees

men from such duties and limits the capacity of all women." In the same vein Munroe (2001) asserts that although women may be accepted as equals and competitors in the world of work, they still have to fulfil their traditional roles of mother and wife. He further notes that the pace of such a life leaves a woman exhausted and disillusioned. Kazembe (1988) also noted that women have to juggle between career and family obligations. It is these early years of one's career when a person has the most energy to forge ahead and a great vision for one's career. However the disruption by marriage cost most female teachers the prospects for career development as they tend to advance later in their careers than male teachers. Women's communitarian obligations compete with their work. Thus there is an age lag in male and female teacher advancement. This lag is attributed to the adjustments females have to go through as they get married. This clearly disrupts the performance of women in their careers. This may hinder or slow down the pace at which they advance in their careers.

## 11.0 CONCLUSIONS

This research concludes that the communitarian philosophy, as it is applied within the Shona culture, is very confining to the female teachers in their quest for advancement in their careers. It is clear that these cultural systems devalue, degrade and dehumanize women. They create women who are not ready to take up leadership positions because:

**Their decision making skills, communication skills, skills of control over their own environment, leadership skills** have been stifled from infancy due to the patriarchal system. One Malawian woman cited in Phiri (2000: 12) laments, "in our own village, where are we women when plans are being made or discussed for the good of our people. It is men who are inside the kraal, we women are cut out." Such type of gendered treatment has deprived many women of the opportunity to develop many of the essential skills such as control of the environment and achievement of success (De Witt and Booysen, 1995).

**Their socialization** has made them subordinate to males, silenced them in the home and the society, and led them to think that their role is to support their husband's development and not their own development. Njoroge (1998: 30) notes that, "in my grandmother's house, I learnt that as a woman I was expected to be silent and express good will towards male persons . . . a child seen but never heard." This type of socialisation affects self concept as well as aspirations of women.

**They have been stereotyped** as weak, immature, thoughtless, always children, indecisive, subservient and passive and dependant on males on everything. Munroe (2001: 12) argues that, "there are fundamental truths about the inherent makeup of women that has been lost to culture and traditions of the world as well as the hearts and minds of individual men and women." This has resulted in the negative stereotypes associated with women.

**They are victims of gender based violence** (physical, emotional and sexual). This makes women bring into the work place broken bones and broken hearts. They come to work depressed, silenced, frightened of males, humiliated, disillusioned, dehumanized, deprived of their thought, dispossessed of their self will, feeling worthless, dejected and frustrated. Naumann (1996) argues that many people think about the physical injuries - the broken bones, bruises and wounds. What people cannot see are the emotional injuries. Njoroge and Dube (2001) show that psychological and emotional abuse deprive a person of her thought and her will resulting in low self esteem, fear of success and dependence on outward appearance.

**They are overworked** at home due to domestic role overload. Munroe (2001) asserts that although women are accepted as competitors in the world of work, they are also expected to fulfil the traditional roles of mother and wife. They come to work exhausted, debilitated of their strength,

disgruntled due to the role conflict imposed upon them by the domestic sphere and the professional sphere.

It is this type of women who come into the education profession. Even though policies may be enacted most, lack the drive to go into education management and inequalities persist in terms of numbers between men and women resulting in serious under representation of women in management positions. Goetz (2010) notes that the patriarchal mindset and social relations that are produced in the private sphere are not contained there, but permeate most economic, social and political systems. Therefore:

- Even though women and men work as equals in the workplace, women's careers are drawn back by experiences in the domestic sphere. Obligations, expectations and social perceptions of womanhood pull them back.
- Freedom for women in the public sphere cannot be translated to freedom in the domestic sphere as social influences affect their professional development.
- Knowledge of gender equity does not mean freedom from gender based discrimination in the socio-cultural field.
- The conflict between work and home causes stress in most women. This is a result of the dual personalities they have to assume to fit the situation. This creates internal conflict which discourages most women to aspire for management position

It is therefore imperative that we relook at what the communitarian philosophy entails and integrate a gender perspective within its tenets. This will go a long way in empowering female teachers as they aspire for educational management posts.

## 12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

We need to think of ways of harmonising foreign grown policies with indigenous knowledge systems and see how the gender question can be addressed from an African perspective. This entails:

- **Redefining the concept of communitarianism to make it more gender inclusive**

The question which now remains is: How far is the Shona culture egalitarian with regards to the different sexes/? Why are the tenets of egalitarianism only confined to one sex while the other sex remains inferior in the Shona hierarchy? These and other questions need a lot of critical thinking and a redefinition of what we mean by egalitarianism. There is need to redefine the concept 'communitarianism' to make it all embracing i.e. to embrace both women and men in its definition of egalitarianism, solidarity and unity.

- **Reinterpretation of the communitarian philosophy in the Shona culture.**

The question is: Are we really interpreting the communitarian philosophy correctly? If the communitarian ethos are revisited i.e. human dignity, liberty, responsibility and open discourse, we see that the Shona culture falls far short of satisfying these tenets in as far as it lacks responsiveness to the gender equity dimension. So there is need to reinterpret what is meant by community in the Shona context. Does community just mean community of the male species and the women species being out of the communitarian circle?

- **Rethinking the impact of the lack of a gender inclusive communitarian ethos on empowerment of female teachers.**

As we craft a way forward in identifying causes of the slow pace at which policy initiatives are bearing fruit towards gender parity in education management, we need to interrogate the way we are executing our well guarded philosophies and ideologies. It is imperative that we revisit the notion of a gender equal and gender blind society from a traditional philosophical perspective. This may be

more empowering than to impose imported solutions which may not be relevant to the African context. Therefore we need to rearticulate the communitarian philosophy and define it in a correct and holistic manner which is gender inclusive.

- **Embracing the communitarian ethos in its holistic sense**

The communitarian philosophy should not be gendered but should be reinterpreted in order to apply its tenets to both males and females alike. We think introducing a gender perspective within the communitarian ethos will make it a holistic philosophy which is all embracing. This will lead to a gender just society which gives opportunity to all its citizens for its full development economically, socially, politically and educationally.

- **Having a renewed vision on women emancipation**

This may result in renewed understanding on what it means to be male or female which will lead to the making of meaningful decisions on what form of leadership would best advance such concerns. There should be comprehensive and transformative approaches to the problem of gender justice in Zimbabwe's education system.

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