Lecturer 2 interview

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**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

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00:04

We can go ahead?

00:16

So, just to start us off, what's your understanding of gender development? Just your understanding of gender development?

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Well, I just think it's it's an aspect where you try to balance and improve the gender roles that different individuals have in society.

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And what do you think are the barriers that are inhabiting, let's say, gender inclusion, at work and the science programmes? Just from what you have been noticing?

01:01

That's a pretty difficult one, I don't think there's anything with WUA that is really hindering the development, I mean, within its system and everything, though. What might be affecting is more of societal issues, and economic issues.

Such as?

01:27

Alright, for one, we have a few girls coming to WUA to study science. I think it’s mostly an issue of the low uptake of sciences in high schools in the beginning, right. And generally, that can be attributed to the way sciences are taught in Zimbabwe. For example, okay, at WUA, we don't have proper scientific equipment to really grill our student for this for the modern world, in terms of use of equipment in the field,

Sorry, you don’t have what?

Equipment labs, laboratories, yeah, we don't have the labs to really equip our students So what we teach generally are managerial programmes, which don't require much or use of equipment. If we really had proper scientific equipment, proper laboratories, we would be able to have more scientific programmes, right. And more engineering problems. So we don't leave those programmes because of the lack of our laboratories and other equipment this side for those programmes.

03:03

The other thing is the way science is taught in Zimbabwe is a bit tough for most people, not just girls. But this can include girls. We teach sciences from a theoretical perspective where most students will rely on claiming the stuff like, they have to memorise how certain things work. The practical aspect is really bad from high schools onwards. So, sciences tend to be difficult for most people, because they're not really, they can't really relate to some of the, let's say, chemical reactions that we are supposed to be teaching them. With other programmes, People can relate to economic issues and societal issues, and they can actually know know what's happening. But in science, you you cannot relate to in experiences that you've had before. It has to be something that you're learning. And that you have to you know, grasp hands on in most cases, we're just teaching them to memorise things, okay. Then may be when they're out in the field, they get to experience some of the equipment. That's why for example, we don't have chemistry at WUA not because it can't be taught but it's because we don't have the laboratories for it. So, you can’t teach someone chemistry, just in the classroom, theoretically, because there is nothing really to relate to it's a new thing. They have to see it, they have to touch it. That's how science works.

04:34

Yeah. And so like, in terms of a gender policy, at WUA, is there one that states anything to do with enrollment for students?

04:46

Not specifically. I think generally by virtue of its mandate, right. It's always implied in everything. In the policies it’s there, in our curriculum it’s there, we actually, our department is actually environmental management, but we also gender modules that we teach our students. It's a must throughout the University. Every programme is to teach some aspect of gender that relates to this field, yes.

05:22

And are there policies that promote uptake of sciences? Well, first of all, like how has been the intake by the students, female versus males? What's the general picture of the people who are planning to enroll.

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More females are taking up sciences at WUA than males. We, like the majority of our students are females. We do have a few males maybe up to three or four maximum, at a time, but in some cases, it is purely a ladies class.

06:15

Oh, yeah. The other aspect is the reason why get to have fewer people, WUA is well known as a gender development institute. Right. So, when most people hear WUA, or the name, they’re related more to social sciences than sciences. So, no one really targets WUA as a specialist university in terms of sciences, its specialty is in those social aspects. So, in most cases, when somebody wants to do social work, sociology, WUA is the best place to go. It is not well known for the sciences. So, we have to promote the science part. There is the need to promote that aspect that, WUA is not purely a social science university, but it also has business management faculty, and the faculty of agriculture. So generally, very few people know that there are science programmes offered at WUA.

07:16

So what you think the institution could do to promote the sciences?

07:21

I think they need to have more of aggressive marketing of WUA. You'll realise that more people are familiar with other State Universities those are very popular. But with WUA it's a private university but it's also, a sort of, I don't know how to put it- it seems like it's a private school of sort of the universities. So, most people think they can't afford fees at WUA. And that, that also hinders the number of students that we get, then, WUA is able to go out into the districts, and market its programmes, that would help a lot.

Because in most cases, there's a lot of competition. When it comes to sciences, for students across the world, and the greatest number of universities we have are state universities. So, what these guys are doing is, they have marketing teams that got into all provinces marketing their products. So, you would realise that, in certain science fields, some universities are well known for certain things. WUA is not not known for anything in terms of sciences, right? If somebody was to do engineering, for example, it’s either they go to CUT, UZ or NUST right? If you're into business, either MSU or UZ. So, those are the things that kind of affect the uptake at WUA because when people talk about sciences, whether it's natural science or engineering, certain universities always pop up because they've been good at marketing themselves. WUA has been very quiet about you know, it's like it caters for the elite only. So a very few people will come for sciences. So, I'm sure if they will go out there to market WUA as a science institution that would help a lot.

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Okay, I would love to go to a different question altogether. So like, in your opinion, like let's say that is the basic marketing that you're talking about? And WUA is able to promote the sciences? How what do you think would actually be the benefits of more uptake, especially by female students at the institution? I would WUA benefit from that?

10:00

Well, I think it would benefit in terms of its roles. For now, its niche is purely gender development. That's what it's known. But if it's known for other things, also, I think it can actually perform its duties better in all aspects. Because if you're focusing only on the social aspect of things, there are a lot more things to life than the social aspect. Right, they need to empower those ladies in the workplaces, white collar jobs, engineering fields and stuff like that. So it's, its mandate can be fulfilled more when everyone is aware of its mandate in what it wants to achieve. I think that's, that's, that's where we, where we are lacking, because it would seem like our graduates are targeted for government and private sector. And I think most of the graduates, I think they would probably just leave the country because they cannot be absorbed most of them in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's gap, for employment for social sciences, its mainly the NGO sector. So, if they don’t get jobs in the NGOs sector it’s, either, they go for government, if they can't, then they're forced to leave Zimbabwe and go to other countries. So, gender development should not only be on the social on the NGO side of things. I’m sure the manufacturing sector they should also do that, in the commercial sector, they should also promote such things. But as it is, the niche that WUA is well known for is community development more like. So, their performance is strictly limited to that area.

11:53

You mentioned that there's supposed to be some kind of gender aspect in programmes, right. But if there's something like a gender needs assessment for each science programme. Is there a gender needs assessment that you do? To ensure that there's participation from the students?

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Yes there is, we just assume everything's taken care of by the gender modules that will teach these kids.

12:28

And do your timetables also consider like let’s say, existing gender roles, gender roles are the interests that males and female students have, let’s say those with families, those with children, with disabilities, those employed. Is that considered on your timetables?

12:51

No, no in our timetables there's nothing that directly links to that. But we do, we are a bit flexible, in terms of how we handle our students. Sometimes students can tell you can call and sort of say, Sorry Sir I might not be able to hand in my assignment in time. So in such instances, we appreciate that sometimes the ladies or guys need to be doing something else. So, we tend to be a bit flexible at times, we might give them an extended deadline. But, of course, we have to be strict at times, because you can’t really have someone submitting an assignment whenever they want. But we do more of an institutional approach sort of thing for our department, because we do appreciate some of the ladies that come they’re mothers, some are wives and some of the guys who come they are actually fathers husbands and brothers and stuff like that. So, some of them have to take care of their families before they come to school. So, we are always flexible. And since we started the online thing, it also helps them to manage their time. Like you can have your some of the lectures online and some of them face to face. So generally, if you have a class that is unable to, you know, most will be unable to come face to face, we’ll opt for the online class so that they have more time to handle their issues, in life.

14:30

Have the online classes been working? Especially for sciences.

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For sciences, they’re a bit difficult they haven’t been working well. Because in some cases you need to show people certain videos aids to learning but you can't because videos take up a lot of dataand most of students the network sometimes is bad, but not all of them have the latest gadgets that are fast, you know. So sometimes data issues come into play. Sometimes it’s the network that is bad, sometimes they’re gadgets don't have power because of electricity issues. So those are the main three things that affect our online learning, data, network and I believe a bit of electricity.

15:26

Okay, so now when it comes to student ratios, those who to start and complete the programmes. How has been, let’s say like the tension and completion ratios of students?

15:41

Most of the time, we have a high percentage of them completing their studies. What I realised is that most of them, sometimes they defer, because of financial issues. Those ones that are unable to finish on time, they can defer for a year or two number of years. Because of financial issues, some of them it's because of marital duties that they may find a bit difficult to handle at a specific time. Then sometimes, they never say, they just go. They just disappear without any notice. I can ask the class but they just say we don't know their numbers aren’t going through. So, some of the reasons we don't know. But mostly it's some of them that gets married or pregnant. Or financial issues. Some of them actually, I think their problems at home for some, because when they ask for deadlines, I really ask “why do you need a deadline, I gave you enough time” and they start telling you that at home they are having challenges, they're not really open so it will be a bit difficult to keep on prying when someone is not comfortable to tell you what’s going on at home.

17:12

But like if you had to say like the percentage of people who compete, what will the percentage be?

17:22

More than 90%. Yeah, you get one or two once in a while, but it's not really widespread. But you do get others who would defer and resurface some years later to finish the program.

17:40

And then when it comes to, let's say, performance wise for your students, what have you noticed over the years in terms of how well the students perform: females versus or males versus females.

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there is no significant difference between their performance. I think it goes out to individual levels, how they prioritize school. But overally I’ve had, most of the girls have been good who’ve been

better students than boys. I think the other thing is, when I get students for my program not of all of them are coming directly from high school. Some coming from their homes, they're married, right? Or some divorced, a single mother and so forth. So, they have a different dedication to school, from experience. They now appreciate the importance of school. So, they really put everything into because I think they would have experienced some things in their past that would have triggered them to work very hard for themselves. Because I’ve realized that the best performers are married women.

19:09

So going back to let’s say, when it comes to lesson planning and programming of the science programs. Pedagogy really refers to the Learning and Teaching Strategies, right? But have you heard of gender responsive pedagogy? Alright, so like, basically gender responsive pedagogy is just looking at, you know, as you do your lesson planning and designs like. Are you considering the backgrounds that males and students have to kind of promote their participation in class, right. So, for example, including gender sensitivity, like how do you ensure gender sensitivity in your lesson. When you do presentations, discussions, assignments. Those things.

20:13

Really we don't do any direct, we just do sciences as sciences. But what we do involve is the practical side, when we ask them to do practicals or research. Is there anything we can actually link towards certain gender issues, even in our examples, that's how we include the gender part. Because we really try to relate to their backgrounds. For example, before I start my lectures, I always ask my students like, where you're coming from, what do you do? Where do you live? Where do you come from, like your rural background something like that. So I so that I know how to pitch my lecture, in terms of my my examples, and how best to make them understand certain concepts.

21:08

So it's really based on individual initiatives, rather than the plan that the department has.

21:15

Yea, it's an individual perspective. So it's a bit difficult to include that in our plan, especially during the COVID era. We were teaching mainly the online. So the only thing you could do was to be the gender sensitive, in the timing of the lecture, like you'd ask them, “when are you free as students.” So sometimes, I will have my lectures in the evening after seven, because some will be saying, “we have to be cooking for husbands or families. so by 7 I'm sure we’ll all been through with cooking.” Then we agree on that. Then we would start our lectures from 7 maybe up to nine or 10. But we wouldn’t go beyond 10, or 9 sometimes, because of their other roles that they need to fulfil at home. So sometimes we'll actually step up maybe from 10 am, online, to around maybe lunch, because maybe the kids have gone to school, they're now free at home and maybe they can attend the lectures, and they have to be done with the lessons before the kids come back from school.

22:34

And do go through gender awareness training as staff?

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I can’t say I have. It's more of like the policies that are there, would guide you towards what is expected of you. But there was no any gender training workshop.

22:59

Okay, so I basically exhausted my questions that I had for you. But do you have any other information? Any additional comments that you might have? Beneficial to my research? Yeah.

23:14

Well, normally, you know, most families don't encourage their girls to go for sciences, because its mainly a male dominated environment, which can be a bit difficult to rise up purely on your talent. So most of them go into social sciences and commercial subjects, where its easy for them to rise. The science field is a bit tricky for most women. Because a male dominated environment, sometimes is not really what most men wont want their wives to spend more time in. You understand? Yeah, so most husbands would encourage most of their wives to go for commercials or social sciences, where they feel like there are more women there so it's safer and women are less prone to abuse than in the science or engineering fields.

I'm sure if you've been to certain areas, let's say in Mbare Magaba or go to Kaguvi street and stuff like that. You see there are some rowdy characters who would be shouting obscenities, they can slap your wives back at anytime. Yeah, no one would really want their wives to be in such an environment. So most med would prefer wife to go into teaching or she works somewhere where you know. It's a safe environment.

So if there's nothing else then we have finished our interview.

Yeah, we have to have. You know, if the country is to promote uptake of sciences by girls or women, it should start from the high schools. That's where it makes the mindset has to be changed. And also our, our work places, they have to be safer for women, they have to be safer for women. In some instances, wwomen might be expected to lift heavy loads if you're in the science, engineering fields. So by nature of their physical build, women are not built for such hard labor. They might end up having more injuries than the guys. So, if we’ve had better, more technologically advanced manufacturing process were they don’t have to lift any heavy loads or do anything too heavy. It would make it easy for women to penetrate. Some of them will just say “I know I'm interested in engineering, but eish I can’t be wrestling with bolts, and that just uplift things”. So they’ll go for the softer sciences. If you look at it, most women go for chemistry or biology where they’ll be working in a laboratory. Yeah, they tend to shy the other sides of science that are a bit vigorous. Yeah, yeah. But generally having a civil engineer as a lady, society tends to frown upon their competence. The assumption is she can’t be committed, she's a woman. You prefer to have a guy being a civil engineer for a town or a company. So, I think women really advise each other, you can go in these fields like certain sciences or engineering fields, but you can’t go into some because your development or growth in that filed will be hindered by how people perceive women to be. You have to be a fighter if you’re going to succeed in some of these industries.

Thank you so much. All right. You're welcome. We’ve pretty much ended our interview. Thank you.