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The Bureaucratisation of the National Gender Machinery, Circumventing the 'Red Tape'

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The bureaucratisation of the National Gender Machinery (NGM) in South Africa is discussed with a specific focus on documenting the historical formation thereof. This article addresses the barriers to implementation and explains the evolution of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for gender equality. Key recommendations for the effective use of the structures of the NGM are provided with an emphasis on an integrated strategy for the furtherance of gender equality within the South African public service.

Keywords: National Gender Machinery; gender mainstreaming; equality; South Africa.

Introduction

The South African State has ratified various pieces of legislation internationally and regionally for the furtherance of gender equality. These include the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Commission for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender Development, to name but a few. Part of the efforts of the South African State to address the implementation of these laws and treaties was the development of policies to ensure that equality measures were operationalised. The National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality is a key policy which is meant to enable the mainstreaming of gender as a strategy for gender equality. Emanating from this policy is the establishment of the National Gender Machinery (NGM) within the South African State. This article assesses the bureaucratisation of the NGM and argues that the structures of the NGM are plagued by the bureaucracy of the state and thus it is unable to deliver on its mandate.

The creation of laws, however, does not necessarily translate into the elimination of gender discrimination. This is evidenced by the Beijing +20 Report 2014, which states that despite the South African State's progressive local legislative commitments to gender, women continue to be discriminated. The Report (2014)[1] goes further to explain:

> Some of the laws also remain ambivalent or are inadequate to tackle systemic and structural discrimination and inequality such as in gender based violence, proprietary rights in marriage, particularly in respect of customary marriages concluded prior to 15 November 2000, hidden employment discrimination, land rights and access and economic inequalities. There is also some resistance to aspects of women's leadership, participation and representation. The factors affecting this will be assessed for the Department of Public Service and Administration in terms of projects and key collaborations attempting to address these shortcomings. (p. 11)

Major obstacles, as reported to the United Nations (UN) in the Beijing +20 Report, are that there are several areas reflecting elements affecting gender equality, including violence against women and girls. Ineffectiveness in mobilising around this social evil was attributed to poor access to resources (both human and financial). Gender-based violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexed (LGBTI) communities was also viewed as a major obstacle in the South African State, which was answered by the establishment of a task team to address Hate Crime Legislation. The report also includes challenges regarding inadequate socio-economic empowerment for women.

Policies and programmatic measures have also been introduced; however, the poor implementation of these measures in some areas, or the lack of monitoring of these measures, or poor local governance has resulted in anomalies between different municipalities and delivery of basic services (Beijing +20 Report 2014:12).

1.Available at http://africachinareporting.co.za/2018/04/report-first-south-africa-china-dialogue-at-wits-university-22-february-2018/.

Note: Special Collection Gender Justice, Health and Human Development, sub-edited by Cheryl Potgieter (Durban University of Technology).

Poverty specifically affecting women and poor implementation of policy and institutional mechanisms have also been cited as major problems. Young African women attending the Beijing +10 Review claimed that an 'inclusive' approach was not adhered to. According to Wilson (2005):

> However, we found that not only was the space of the Beijing +10 process not necessarily defined by the feminist and women's movements – the space was facilitated by the UN. (p. 64)

The latter speaks about the dichotomy of being the player and referee in the global gender equality struggle.

In the National Gender Survey conducted by the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) in South Africa, Julien and Majake (2005:78) believe that the findings reflect a reaffirmation that a gap exists between policy and implementation. They recommend that, '… more vigorous intervention is needed for repositioning feminist knowledge and development'. Van der Westhuizen (2005:102) adds to the gender equality debate, by affirming that '… at the bottom of gender inequality lies power – who has it, but most decisively, how it is exercised' (Julien & Majake 2005:78).

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the following question comes to mind: is the South African State held hostage to unattainable targets and interventions that are not sensitive to the needs of its people? How is power negotiated between the need to have a global presence and to set a South African gender agenda? Sewpaul (2005) and Rotmann (2005) support the view that the South African State should critically analyse approaches suggested by international and regional bodies before implementing them. The Beijing +20 Report is also supported by the Towards a 15 Year Review (2009), arguing that:

> While these institutional arrangements for driving the issues of gender equality tend to be acknowledged internationally as best practice, closer to home one finds challenges in their operation. Chief among these is the matter of entrenched negative attitudes towards gender equality, lack of understanding and accountability to address this coherently, and inadequate mechanisms and resourcing, financially and in terms of human capacity, for effective implementation. Related to this is a problem of policy frameworks without legal status that are therefore not legally binding.

Comparatively, Chukwuemeka (2012) in her discussion on the Nigerian case states that policy implementation has become the focus after realising that effective implementation is not automatic. This is comparative to the case of South Africa given the major challenges experienced in implementing key legislative commitments discussed thus far. Roux (2002:245), in her analysis of policy formulation and implementation, looks at how South Africa is held accountable to a set of standards set by international agreements. '… [g]overnment is obliged to constantly measure its national policies and programmes against international, or global, best practices and requirements'.

Ultimately, policies formulated by the South African State and the main international legislative commitments are

aimed at change. However, several elements need to be in place to effect this. To this end, Roux (2002) claims:

> Real transformation can only successfully occur when the majority of individuals in political and executive institutions change their mindsets, behaviour and corporate culture. Everything is involved, from structures and systems, management styles, core competencies and worker profiles, to core outputs required. (p. 419)

'Mindsets', as Roux (2002) claims, is a very important factor in the mainstreaming of gender in the state. This sentiment is echoed by Stone (2001), who adds an additional element to policy diffusion:

> The centrality of knowledge in much of the international political economy and emerging forms of global governance suggest new manifestations for the mobilisation of knowledge through networks. (p. 21)

Therefore, in achieving the overall goals of local, regional and international legislation as it relates to gender equality, perhaps a more integrated approach needs to be employed. This is supported by McAdam and Rucht (1993) and Stone (2000). 'Knowledge networks', as referred to by Stone (2000), is an important factor in the mainstreaming plans employed. The lack of support for gender focal points (GFPs) is a major stumbling block in the achievement of gender mainstreaming initiatives through training. Knowledge networks is an essential element that can be considered as a possible support strategy for the mainstreaming of the National Policy Framework (NPF).

A specific challenge to the achievement of the goals of the international and regional instruments is that of culture in the civil service. The Public Service Commission asserts in its Gender Mainstreaming Initiative in the Public Service Report (2006):[2]

> Participants at senior management level argued that the predominantly male culture has made it difficult for their voices to be heard. (p. 48)

Key conclusions drawn by the Public Service Commission (PSC) indicate the level of success for gender projects in the South African State stating clearly that leadership support for such initiatives is critical for South Africa. These barriers will require unique intervention at local level in order to achieve the overall goals of international and regional instruments.

Ntlama (2010) suggests that:

> … [G]ender equality is a gradual process that should not be undertaken overnight but on a continuous basis. (p. ii)

Ntlama (2010) further states that law alone is, therefore, limited in application. The promotion of the right to gender equality is inhibited by many obstacles. These include, but are not limited to, sociocultural factors, lack of legal information, lack of access to justice and, most notably, poor resources to implement gender legislation. In achieving the criteria for success as set by international and regional

2. Available at: http://www.psc.gov.za/.

instruments, South Africa must acknowledge the role of customary practices. Legal reform must not be cast aside; instead, the South African State has to look at addressing the factors affecting the successful implementation of legal reforms, specifically looking at the critical factors outlined above. This research article, therefore, builds on Ntlama's (2010) argument by focusing on the translation of policy into implementation:

> The effectiveness of the law depends on the understanding of the dynamics which are the subject of gender equality. For a deeper understanding of the significance of the law to deal with specific problems relating to inequalities and non-discrimination, it is of utmost importance to take into account the factors that may undermine its significance. The importance of both national and international legal instruments remains constrained in their ability to improve the lives of women. The legal framework is good but its translation to substantive and practical realities remain [*sic*] unclear. (p. 240)

Mannell (2012) offers another perspective on strategies of the South African State. In her pilot study on the 'actors' of gender mainstreaming in South Africa, Mannell (2012) claims:

> … Gender Mainstreaming policy had failed to be implemented in their organisation, including interpersonal disputes, changes in job positions, a lack of support from management, the prioritisation of diversity policy over gender policy, and fatigue with the administrative bureaucracy gender mainstreaming seemed to require. (p. 61)

This observation speaks about the barriers faced by the state in achieving the standards set by external organisations. Eyben (2008) suggests that in order for policy to be effective, it cannot be viewed as something handed down by international institutions or government. Mosse and Lewis (2005) further state that at each stage of policy 'production' actors shape the implementation thereof to suit their needs. More 'shaping' is needed for the state in translating international and regional instruments into practice. The current criteria, therefore, would also need this influence in order for the state to be fairly assessed in the international and regional arenas.

History of gender mainstreaming as a school of thought

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2009:1),[3] '[*g*]ender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female'. The UNFPA notes that biological characteristics are associated with societal roles and expectations, but they differ from society to society and evolve over a period. The position of women has changed dramatically since the first formal initiatives towards equality – the South African Women's March in 1954. Gender equity can be described as the process of ensuring fairness and equal distribution of resources amongst men and women. 'Equity leads to equality and where gender inequality exists it is the women who are

3. Available at: https://www.unfpa.org/about-us.

excluded in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources' (UNFPA 2009:2). In the 1970s, it was envisaged that in order to achieve gender equality separate interventions specifically aimed at women were needed. In the run-up to the 1985 UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace Gathering in Nairobi, it was realised that a more streamlined approach was needed (Reeves & Bayden 2000:12).

By allowing women-specific activities to be separate, efforts at equality were essentially marginalised. It was, therefore, envisaged that a mainstreaming strategy for gender would assist in embedding gender concerns in all areas and sectors. In 1987, the UN Commission on the Status of Women took the lead role in coordinating and promoting social and economic issues for women's empowerment.

The UN Commission on the Status of Women focused on women's issues as part of the mainstream (see the Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women). The UN Commission on the Status of Women as the coordinating body then convened a further conference in 1995 where 189 countries were represented and became signatory to the BPFA, which advocated that equality for women with men be achieved in law and practice and not as a separate 'women's issue'.

The BPFA was not, however, conceptualised in vacuum and stipulated various criteria to ensure the implementation of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for gender equality:

> The General Assembly in Resolution 52/100 (December 1997) requested all bodies within the UN system that deal with programme and budgetary matters to ensure that all programmes, medium-term plans and programmes' budgets visibly mainstream a gender perspective. (The Development of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy; Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, UN, August 2001:2)

The mainstreaming strategy of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, therefore, advocates that responsibility for mainstreaming lies with the highest level echelons of governance and development organisations within the UN to develop an accountability and monitoring system for the mainstreaming of gender. UN/DAW (1998) describes gender mainstreaming as:

> … [*T*]he process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. (p. 4)

The way to mainstream gender in an effective manner is linking gender equality to the relevant sector.

However, this cannot be undertaken in an *ad hoc* manner. The Office of the Special Advisor Report (2001:12) argues

that for institutional development to be effective, one must intend on 'developing guidelines, utilising gender specialists, providing competence development for all personnel, etc., is also required to support gender mainstreaming'. A key factor that needs to be in place is buy-in from senior management. As described earlier, the UN Commission on the Status of Women advocates that responsibility for mainstreaming rests on the highest managerial levels. Therefore, without political will or support in governments, mainstreaming essentially would be ineffective as reflected in the cases described under the section Analysing the public service structures for gender mainstreaming 'Throughout the world, women suffer disadvantage. There are differences from country to country and region to region, because disadvantage is caused by cultural, historical and social factors' (Institutional and Organisational Change, Government of Netherlands 2002:1).[4]

Institutionalising gender mainstreaming is emerging as the key to meaningful mainstreaming of gender.

Gender mainstreaming highlights the inclusion of gender instead of women. The latter is a major difference in how reports would come to be presented. Prugl and Meyer (1999) suggest that gender emerged as a crucial concept. Staudt (1998) also argues that the term 'gender' became part of mainstreaming in development. This shift signalled that both men and women have the responsibility of changing gender relations in institutions. The term also implies an inclusive focus on masculinity and femininity. Eveline and Bacchi (2005) posit that placing masculinity in the gender mainstreaming arena may cause tension. They advise on the depoliticising of gender with a focus on how men can benefit. This could lead to the overlooking of gendered relations and their link to power. The latter would essentially undo what gender mainstreaming is in fact setting out to achieve, a move towards equality and not the furtherance of patriarchal practices.

The gender mainstreaming process involves many complexities. Thege and Welpe (2002) advise that it involves a gender perspective, knowledge and research. They argue that if these elements are in fact precursors to effective gender mainstreaming, then it may not ever be realised in any organisation because of institutionalised patriarchal practices. They go on to suggest that gender mainstreaming is not automatic. Training interventions must be undertaken to ensure gender awareness and gender sensitivity. They argue that people need to be provided with the tools to ensure the change process.

Monitoring and assessment is another important aspect of gender policy implementation. An important consideration is the buy-in of at least one-third of people in an institution. Thege and Welpe (2002) argue that mainstreaming policies cannot succeed by being forced from the higher ranking officials; this is because those who implement the policies

4.Available at https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10639-009-9114-z.

need to have the tools and knowledge of what the policies encompass before being able to effectively implement them.

There are a great number of views on gender mainstreaming theory. The Council of Europe (1998:19–20) provides several reasons that necessitate gender mainstreaming. Firstly, gender mainstreaming 'puts people at the heart of policy-making'. In effect, this means that once policymakers get used to gender mainstreaming, it will ensure that the practice and evaluation of policies will be people-centred, rather than based on 'economic and ideological indicators'. Secondly, gender mainstreaming will lead to 'better informed policy-making and therefore better government'. Thirdly, instead of a small group of women, the practice and inclusion of gender mainstreaming will ensure that both women and men participate. Fourthly, gender mainstreaming will provide 'a clear idea of the consequences and impact of political initiatives on both men and women and of the balance between women and men in the area concerned'.

Jahan (1995) outlines the difference between integrationist and agenda-setting mainstreaming. She suggests that the origin of integrationist gender mainstreaming dates back to the UN Decade for Women (1976–1985). Tiessen (2007) believes that gender mainstreaming emerged at the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975. Other scholars (Goetz 1997; Gouws 2005a; Hafner-Burton & Pollack 2002) claim that mainstreaming can be traced back to Nairobi 18 as the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies. The strategies refer to mainstreaming in Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, Para 114 almost a decade before Beijing report. True (2001) believes that the concept developed further in the early 1990s. Yet another school of thought (Alston 2006; Moser & Moser 2005; Rees 2005; Squires & Wickham-Jones 2004; Thege & Welpe 2002) posits that gender mainstreaming started with the Fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995, when the BPFA officially identified it as the strategy to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. The BPFA Report stated that states and other actors must adopt visible commitment to gender mainstreaming (BPFA Report 1995). According to Gouws (2005a:8), '[t]he discursive framework within which women's interests are constituted within the State is "Gender Mainstreaming"'.

The NGM has been institutionalised since 1997 (Gouws 2005a). Its aim is (SA National Gender Policy Framework 2001):

> To achieve gender equality, government must embark on a rigorous gender mainstreaming strategy. To this end, much of the responsibility for planning and implementing effective and innovative strategies for the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality will rest equally with key structures of the National Machinery and with individual government departments at the national, provincial and local levels. (p. 40)

This clause, however, does not absolve the state of its responsibility to mainstream gender.

Gouws (2005a) offers an opposing view and argues that whilst gender mainstreaming aims at operationalising and

therefore institutionalising gender, it decreases women's agency and activism because of its technocratic nature. She argues that the overriding incorrect assumption attached to gender mainstreaming as a strategy is that women are a homogeneous group. Scholars are critical of gender mainstreaming as mentioned earlier in this subsection. Alternatives to gender mainstreaming as a strategy for gender equality are explored through an analysis of the enablers and/or constraints placed on resources, political will and an enabling environment in the rollout of the gender projects in the state.

The role of patriarchy in the South African State context must be included to fully understand the context for gender mainstreaming. According to Reid and Walker (2005), the change from apartheid to democracy has had a major impact on the men of South Africa. Morrell (2002) lists three responses from men to the gender equality move in South Africa: (1) some men attempt the protection of their privilege, (2) some view this as a masculinity crisis and (3) some support for gender justice. Morrell's (2002) findings are relevant to this study as ideally the State Departments should move towards joining the fight for gender justice. The State must reflect on how to rally supportive men for the other two categories for gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming practitioners must engage with masculinism and they have to focus on the deep structure of organisations (Rao et al. 1999). Whilst the analysis will examine the importance and weight given to the Diversity Management Unit at the Department of Public Service and Administration, the article will not delve into the deep structure of the state. Masculinity most notably must be addressed as Connell, (2007:18) claims, '[c]hange among men, on quite a wide scale, is essential if we want to advance gender equality…'

Williams (2004:2) states that one of the key problems with regard to gender mainstreaming is that it has lost its principal and fundamental elements. The author argues that gender mainstreaming should be seen as an equity process. Equality and gender justice must be placed in all of the critical areas for women and men, rather than viewing this as an end goal for governments to aspire to. She further argues that gender mainstreaming must be the foundation for development and democratic processes. Furthermore, she argues that there is a need to return to the fundamental basis of gender mainstreaming because there are indications that the international community has lost the urgency of gender as a major category of analysis. There needs to be a focus on the relationship of power between women and men in terms of access to resources and power dynamics (Williams 2004:2).

Moreover, gender mainstreaming now faces issues related to conflict, and dilemmas tied up in different interpretations and expectations at the organisational, policy-making and operational levels. Williams (2004) claims that there is a lack of focus on strengthening analytical and policy-oriented initiatives to improve the different categories of gender mainstreaming policies; there is an increasing gap and a lack

of consultation and coordination on gender mainstreaming at all policy-making levels leading to a disjointed approach to gender mainstreaming issues.

Moser (2007:xx–xxi) provides another perspective to gender mainstreaming, arguing that an analytical approach should be adopted in order to work towards the eradication of gender inequalities. This approach 'assumes that societies, their social relations, economies and power structures contain deeply etched gender divisions, in the same way that they reflect class, ethnic and racial divisions' (Moser 2007:xx–xxi). She further argues that, for example, markets are not always scrutinised with a gender analysis; there is a false assumption that these aspects are gender-neutral.

According to Mehra and Gupta (2006:2–3), gender mainstreaming includes all aspects of implementation and monitoring of all and any sociopolitical or economic activities. This means that there would be changes in both the manner in which organisations function internally and externally. Internal change refers to a situation where organisations adopt a change in management process to include the goals and values of gender mainstreaming and to change systems to meet these overall goals. External aspect relates to the steps needed to mainstream gender into development operations, such as implementation and evaluation.

Reeves and Baden (2000) explain that in North America, the Women in Development (WID) was particularly influential in the 1970s. It was a response to women being viewed as passive beneficiaries of industrial development. Women's 'issues' were viewed as insufficient participation through an oversight of policymakers. This view of Reeves and Baden (2000:33) is supported by Gallin and Ferguson (1993), Jahan (1995) and Moser (1993). The WID approach, however, is not as clearly defined as implied by Reeves and Baden (2000). Moser (1993) and Momsen (1991) argue that the WID approach has five sub-approaches, which include equity, welfare, anti-poverty, empowerment and efficiency. The welfare approach viewed reproduction to be women's main role and identified them as passive recipients of development (Moser 1993; Mosse 1993).

Visvanathan (1997), in discussing the welfare approach, argues that the welfare approach focused women's practical needs whilst their strategic needs were ignored. Hassim and Gouws (1998) state that:

> … [S]trategic interests can be defined as those claims which seek to transform social relations so as to promote the equality of men and women, while practical interests may be seen as those which arise from women's gendered responsibilities within the family and community and which makes no explicit claims to challenge power relations. (p. 61)

The equity approach, adopted in the Decade for Women 1975–1985, is unpopular with developing States and development agencies, which felt that it necessitated 'unacceptable interference with a country's traditions' (Moser 1993:65). This is because the equity approach focused on the

triple oppression of women and included strategic interests. The anti-poverty approach is often identified as the second WID approach (Mosse 1993). This approach seeks to empower women to attain an income through small-scale income-generating projects. Some see this as a 'toned-down' version of the equity approach. It remains to be seen whether this approach also addresses strategic needs in terms of building women's capacity through their own means. The latter again is particularly problematic in the developing world and for cultures that are non-Western by design as the power dynamics of cultures often create barriers to the success of women.

The efficiency approach recognises women's economic participation in economic growth. In the 1980's and the early 1990's, Moser (1993) argues that women's participation in economic growth was predominant in agencies working withing a WID outlook. WID looks at including women in economic development. Posits that the efficiency approach highlights the development process as more important than women. She argues that this objectifies women and allows for compliance development rather than true development. Moser further argues that this approach also effectively disregards women's strategic interests as they have to work longer hours and have the burden of unpaid labour in the private space.

Finally, in the 1980s the women empowerment approach was developed by third-world feminists. It is a reaction to Northern white feminist domination of development with a disregard for third-world issues. The women empowerment approach also highlighted the weaknesses of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach to developing women (Mosse 1993) and identifies masculinism, colonial and neo-colonial oppression as the root cause of women's oppression (Momsen 1991).

These categories are not a realistic reflection of gender relations in practice. This is especially true for the South African State context. Several approaches are applied in the South African State by the state structures and the Women's Movement. Many of these approaches appeared simultaneously and often conflicted with each other. In addition, development organisations have combined approaches to cater for diversity in needs in various development contexts (Moser 1993; Mosse 1993).

These categories reflect a top-down approach and they are not inclusive in the development and/or application thereof. The ability to mainstream was therefore affected by power relations (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1994). Notwithstanding these shortcomings to the WID approach to development, Staudt (1998) and Hirshman (1995) maintain that WID is not necessarily negative. They believe that it is a step towards equality. However, a focus on gender and gender relations as espoused by the Gender and Development Approach was seen by many in the field as an important step in progressing beyond WID.

Elson (1991) argues that the WID approach has the following limitations:

- It assumes that women can be added as a gender category and that is sufficient to improve women's position in society.
- It assumed that development is dependent on men.
- It could possibly place an emphasis on women being the problem instead of gender discrimination.
- It could make the assumption that women are a homogeneous group.

De Waal (2006:210–211) adds that gender mainstreaming developed over several decades and it has its roots in the WID approach, which called for more focus on the WID policy in practice and emphasised the urgency for the development process to integrate women. The second approach is GAD, which focused on men and women and the need to challenge the social differences between them (Reeves & Baden 2002 quoted in De Waal 2006). GAD uses political, economic and ideological forces to explain women's subordination. It also draws on the sexual division of labour (Parpart 1995; Visvanathan 1997). Gender mainstreaming focuses on both strategic and practical needs of women (Rathgeber 1989).

The GAD approach is built upon by Reeves and Baden (2000) who explain that the GAD approach to policy and practice focuses on the socially constructed differences between men and women. They underscore the need to challenge existing gender stereotypes. GAD emerged in the absence of progress with WID policy in changing women's lives in a meaningful manner and attempted to influence the broader development agenda. GAD challenged the WID focus on women as a homogeneous group with similar interests. GAD saw women's 'real' problem as the unfair balance of power in favour of men. Claims that '[*n*]o study of women and development can start from the viewpoint that the problem is women, but rather men and women, and more specifically the relations between them'. According to Jahan (1995), the Global South requires transformation of the development agenda and must include a gender perspective. Women hailing from the Global South are seen as added on after the fact and this late inclusion is incorrect. They want development practices that transform their contexts. Notably, GAD uses gender relations rather than 'women' as a category (Visvanathan 1997). Gender mainstreaming, therefore, emerged from the GAD approach. This subsection provided an overview of the concept of gender mainstreaming as well as a number of definitions. The next subsection will focus on the origin of gender mainstreaming and the different schools of thought.

The shortcomings of gender mainstreaming must also be discussed to provide a balanced view on this school of thought as a strategy for gender equality. Johnsson-Latham (2004:5) lists elements that have generally been noted as problems. Most relevant to the research is the conclusion that because of the absence of commitment, funding and human resources, gender mainstreaming has been reduced to a technique rather than an important integral process. This article brings a new angle to the debate by analysing the overriding factor of political will in

ensuring that gender is mainstreamed effectively in the public service. The political will here, as discussed in the Introduction section, is not limited to the external actors. Alston (2006:123) claims that some evidence suggests that gender mainstreaming is poorly understood by many in higher positions of power. As a result, women, particularly at grassroots level, do not always benefit from gender mainstreaming. Hannan (2000:1–14) states that since 1995 a number of serious misconceptions around gender mainstreaming have developed, hampering the effective implementation of the strategy. These are sometimes linked to the lack of knowledge of concepts such as 'gender' and 'gender equality'. The understanding of gender as a concept is one aspect of the research focus. Rather the major discussion is focused on the role of political will in ensuring that there is a common understanding and approach towards gender equality.

Gasa (2003) states that there are key issues that influence the functioning of gender machineries in general. They are often under-resourced, with complex budget lines that impact their functioning, and their location has been a matter of debate. These debates, however, were identified in the earlier years of democracy (see also Hassim 2003 and Gouws 2006). The point raised by Gasa is important because the location of gender machineries sometimes makes a difference in whether they are given the leverage and resources to fully discharge their mandates. In the case of South Africa, the state's highly politicised manner of dealing with the NGM and the Department of Women (DoW; tasked with leading the NGM) has been a major stumbling block for the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Notably, the development of gender mainstreaming did not take into account the functioning and location of key role players. The political will from within a department and external to a department is needed for gender mainstreaming to be effective. The under-resourcing and complications of accountable machineries as discussed by Hassim (2006) and Gasa (2003) ignore the overriding factor of political will in realising the goals of mainstreaming. The political will was indeed evidenced by the development of the machineries, however, and perhaps ironically so, in creating the bureaucracy hindered political will when in fact this was meant to enable a system for gender equality.

Leyenaar (2004:210) raises an issue that relates to the attitude adopted towards engendering policies. She highlights that the political will to achieve greater equality by incorporating a gender perspective in policies is not a matter of routine. Wendoh and Wallace (2005:70–73) in their analysis of African countries' attention to gender mainstreaming note that officials at higher management echelons give priority to their own activities and consider gender issues to have less value. Lyons (2004:64) argues that gender as a specific cultural construct varies from culture to culture. In effect, this means that those whose responsibility is to mainstream gender must be cautious of using a one-size-fits-all approach, as every situation has its unique opportunities and challenges. A similar study undertaken by the Department of Water Affairs (2006–2010) in implementing gender mainstreaming into operations revealed that there is a marginalisation of gender.

Gender mainstreaming is viewed as a non-core function for government departments. As a result, officials working on gender mainstreaming struggle to ensure that issues related to gender mainstreaming are taken seriously. Moser (2005:576–590) posits that the ultimate test of whether gender mainstreaming has succeeded or failed lies in the rigorous monitoring and evaluation tools. For Moser, the biggest challenge lies in identifying correct indicators, which would require four inter-related indicators measuring inputs, outputs, effects and impacts.

An Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) article (2004:22–23) also highlights that National Gender Machineries face financial challenges as they are often under-resourced and unable to operate on the inadequate budget allocated to them. As Clisby (2005:23) points out, much still needs to be addressed to ensure that gender mainstreaming is translated into tangible results on the ground. She cautions that unless this is carried out, gender mainstreaming becomes semantics co-opted by politicians and policy-makers. Riley (2004:111) also states that experience in organisations has indicated that changing from gender mainstreaming as a policy to implementing or practising gender mainstreaming has been challenging. Riley notes, amongst others, the need for practical training on gender mainstreaming.

Analysing the public service structures for gender mainstreaming

The South African state is described as (Picard 2005):

> The set of structures and processes (including the public service, the nature of governmental-social relationships and internal organisational dynamics) which evolve over time as a permanent part of the dynamics of government. (p. 13)

The development and launch of the NGM was led by the then Office on the Status of Women (OSW) in the Presidency, which was responsible for the support of gender mainstreaming initiatives in the South African public service. The African Development Bank (2009) describes the NGM, until May 2009, as follows:

> The OSW is located in the Office of the Presidency at the national level and in the Office of the Premiers at the provincial level. The Gender Focal Units or Points in government departments also exist at both national and provincial level and they are coordinated by OSW.

> The CGE is an independent body and also has provincial offices.

> The Parliamentary Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women (JMC) comprises members from the National Assembly (NA) and members from the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

> Finally, gender focused NGOs are also seen as forming part of the NGM. (p. 21)

The final point speaks about a subtle shift in the South African Women's Movement. This means that some women's organisations such as GenderLinks became part of the NGM. Several NGM meetings presented the work of GenderLinks as an official agenda item. Whilst the Women's National Coalition (WNC) was active prior to democracy, currently gender-focused organisations are also included. The decline of the WNC was clearly evident. The activism of the Women's Movement allowed for much progress for South African women in the early 1990s. An example is:

> … [T]he 'Women's Charter process', in which women, with the WNC playing a major role … drew up the Charter for Effective Equality and handed it to President Nelson Mandela in 1994. (Fester 1998:236; Gouws 2005:113)

Women's movements refer to alliances amongst women's organisations around issues of gender equality, whilst women's organisations refer to individual organisations. There exists heterogeneity of organisations such as professional associations, networks and service providers. The slow retreat of the Women's Movement according to Gouws (2005) is attributed to the sectoral organisation of women around issues such as health, domestic violence and notably comments on the impact of rural women on influencing the impact of the passing of certain legislation. This mobilisation was influenced by a decline in optimism and a degree of scepticism in the NGM. Many women activists had been absorbed into government and this had a major impact on their effectiveness (Fester 1998). In addition, Hassim (2003) claims that the Women's Movement wanted equality in the norms and procedures of government and wanted to reduce a reliance on political will for the success of gender equality. This was not being met by the NGM and thus a retreat by the Women's Movement was perhaps inevitable in order to mobilise around key issues. See also Hassim (2006a) in her analysis of the trajectory of women's organisations in South Africa.

The decline, however, was preceded by many critical actions to ensure gender mainstreaming occurred within the state. Gouws (2005:113) expands on the acceptance of the NGM, '[t]he acceptance of an NGM followed on a long and hard struggle by South African women to put gender on the agenda'. This work is currently largely unacknowledged by the state and it is evident in the current focus on policy without any interest in engaging other sectors.

The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) was constructed to monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives; it must however be noted that the JMC no longer exists. It undertook an analysis of the progress of the NGM from its inception in 1996 until 2008. In May 2009, following intensive lobbying, and built on the work of the South African Women's Movement in placing gender on the agenda, the Ministry for Women, Children, Youth and persons with Disabilities was launched. The development and launch of the Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and the Disabled was a major step forward; however, the formation of the ministry was controversial. The Mandela-led government ratified the highest number of international women's rights

available at the time by enabling constitutional equality. The NGM was founded on a long tradition of struggle; therefore, the establishment thereof was not easy. Women's issues and women's struggles featured in the national liberation struggle in the 1980s (see Fester 1998, 2000; Geisler 2004).

The NGM was a major entity put in place by the state to address gender equality; however, the clout given to the NGM remains questionable with many internal role players, such as GFPs, citing lack of resources as a major stumbling block to rollout and integral to this is the assertion that political will is a major factor in unblocking the barriers. These elements will be explored in the concluding section.

The formation of the ministry was in my opinion a major step forward, however, flawed the process may have been. The intent was to create a ministry dedicated to gender issues along with those marginalised issues affecting people living with disabilities and the rights of children. The ministry faced many obstacles at the start and struggled with the structure and appointment of skilled staff.

The ministry was meant to drive the NGM along with several other functions addressing gender equality initiatives in the South African public service. The fact that this was presented and passed in parliament as a new ministry with a dedicated department and not just a subsidiary unit under the Presidency as it was previously housed shows that gender was being elevated in 2009. Notably, this was driven under a Presidency that highlighted the aspect of gender equality in the manifesto of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), and also gazetted the requirement for gender equity targets, thus formally reflecting the political will of politicians for the inclusion of gender equality. The time period 1994–1996 was critical with regard to public participation. Walsh (2006) claims that:

> … [N]ew attention was paid to gender equality in the economy, and new institutional reforms were established to ensure government accountability on gender issues… Never before had all of South people been invited to exercise their freedom of speech, to convey their ideas to regional and national Parliaments, or parade in the streets celebrating the ideals of their nation. (p. 86)

This inclusivity was, however, short-lived. Walsh (2006) explains that by 1997 the ANC moved to marginalise feminists. The changes in politics have a direct relationship with public administration (see also Fester 2005; Gouws 2005; Hassim 2006). Public administration has its roots in politics; without meaningful political will, administration cannot implement sound policies and legislation (Du Toit & Van der Walt 1999). Notably, political will is required in order to provide access to resources and thereby create an enabling environment.

Given the delay in the adoption of the NPF, each member of the machinery assumed roles and responsibilities, which in practice resulted in many portfolio overlaps. Initially the CGE was viewed as being part of the civil society (see Gouws 2006). The NGM was under-staffed and under-financed. In 1997, the OSW was populated with two staff members.

The CGE had a budget of ZAR 2 million, the budget could not cover salaries; therefore, money for projects was lacking. The Human Rights Commission, however, had a budget of ZAR 27 million (Geisler 2004:139). This point is notable as it speaks about the lack of prioritisation of gender on the national agenda. Chapter Nine Institutions have a distinct role outside of the state and such must be capacitated to do so. This analysis adds to the gender debates as it points to the link that political will has to resources and thus also to the creation of an enabling environment.

The new ministry was tasked with advocating women's rights and it was formed to ensure that gender equality was achieved in the public service. A major strategy of the ministry was to co-ordinate the NGM and provide a mainstreaming function for issues of gender, youth and disability. The previous organogram as indicated on their website, an entire Chief Directorate had been appointed to the area of gender mainstreaming (see www.wcpd.gov.za). The ministry was subsumed under the Department of Social Development (DSD) in 2014 because of poor performance and lack of political will and this subsequently elevated to ministerial status once again in 2015, as the DoW.

Structures for gender equality also existed at parliamentary level. The Women's Empowerment Unit (WEU) was based in the office of the speaker and Parliamentary Women's Group (PWG), which had multi-party affiliations (Britton 2005; Vetten & Ratele 2013). These spaces operated for the deliberation of issues affecting women in South Africa. The WEU supported women parliamentarians in gaining technical capacity to advance a gender equality agenda.

However, the WEU and PWG were not institutionalised within parliament and did not receive support from institutional resources (Vetten & Ratele 2013). Furthermore, '… some MPs also commented that the idea of a caucus that was not subject to the authority of party whips was increasingly seen as problematic to party hierarchies' (Vetten et al. 2012:11). By 2002, both caucuses had largely fizzled out. Hassim (2006b:195) notes that the failure of women political elites within parliament to sustain multi-party women's caucuses '… was a strong indication of the shallowness of common interest among women from different parties'. The lack of support for the caucuses speaks about the lack of political will for the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies in the state.

During negotiations in the early 1990s, a major issue was the preservation of the foundational principles upon which the CGE was built (Meintjes 2005). Chapter Nine of the Constitution addresses this by including, amongst others, the CGE as a key institution. In terms of the Constitution, Chapter Nine Institutions are independent. These institutions are only subjected to the Constitution and the law. Whilst South Africa has progressive policies and a Constitution that propagates gender equality, the realisation of these rights is achieved in a very limited manner (Fester 2007; Govender 2002; Hassim 1999; Salo 2001, 2007).

How does South Africa fair in the international arena?

Rathgeber (2006) argues:

> … [S]ome agencies have regarded gender mainstreaming as a goal that can be achieved through the provision of appropriate training materials, guidelines and checklists for their staff. However, experience has shown that gender mainstreaming cannot be achieved without active involvement by senior managers. (p. 14)

Rathgeber's experience is echoed in the South African experience.

Globally, other governments have noted that institutional mechanisms must be developed in order for gender to be effectively mainstreamed. This shift is largely because of pressure from the UN. Madrid (2009) adds to the debate by arguing that although much attention has been given to gender equity, this issue has not been adequately addressed by countries seeming to be in compliance with the requirements of international treaties. Madrid (2009), therefore, supports the notion that countries are complying with legalistic requirements for gender mainstreaming in a very limited manner, thus rendering gender mainstreaming efforts ineffectual.

Gender equity has become a public issue since the UN Decade for Women (1975–1985). Several countries have provided different emphasis to this problem. Some countries have developed broad gender policies and mechanisms whilst others have partial and sometimes incoherent actions (Madrid 2009:1).

This points to the disjointed nature of state implementation of gender projects towards gender equality.

Madrid (2009) notes that the implementation of policies advocated by the Service national des messageries (SERNAM) does not interface with the policies of the Chilean Department of Education, rendering Chile's educational policies insensitive to gender. Without this close synergy, other role players such as the Chilean Catholic Church regulate a more conservative policy, especially in the area of sexual health (Madrid 2009:9). That said, Chile has had notable success in the mainstreaming of gender in other areas. The establishment of the Council of Ministers on 'equal opportunity' and the inclusion of gender as a focus in the Ministry for Finance signify progress, particularly in the former where 'equal opportunity' is informed by the Equal Opportunity Plan for Women and Men (Report on Implementation of the BPFA presented by the Government of Chile to the UN Division for the Advancement of Women 2004:25).

Programmes in Uganda were affected by factors such as insensitivity, poorly rendered gender disaggregated data and limited financial resources, amongst others. These factors result in poor gender responsiveness and poor gender-sensitive development practice (Tanzarn 2003:6). Similar

cultural problems are faced in South Africa (Ratele 2007). Once again, the need for institutional mechanisms for the effective mainstreaming of gender is emphasised because social and cultural stereotypes still treat gender mainstreaming as a women's issue. There is a glaring failure to implement seemingly progressive legislation.

Mexico faces similar barriers to the mainstreaming of gender in its energy sector, particularly in the Department of Technical Co-operation. Like Uganda, this male-dominated sector struggles to mainstream gender because of a lack of institutional mechanisms. Rathgeber (2006) explains that in the Department of Technical Co-operation, there are glaring problems with the recruitment of female scientists:

> Often women and girls are steered away from careers in science. It is therefore necessary to build a base of female scientists to counterbalance this. (p. 35)

Rathgeber (2006) claims that women are deliberately excluded from the recruitment process, based on ideas as to what 'qualified' means. She advocates the need for a clear understanding of what 'qualified' is defined as and maintains that the area of management experience needs to be revised in order to provide equal opportunities. In the case of Mexico, women were delayed in achieving their management experience in the field of nuclear energy and this must not be recognised as a shortcoming for such candidates in the recruitment process.

Rathgeber (2006) advocates that the Department of Technical Co-operation must work closely with the national women's machinery and provide support for gender mainstreaming to be effective. The author states that (Rathgeber 2006):

> … [N]ational machineries are given the necessary support to enable them to provide input into the projects of national counterparts, e.g. budget provision should be made for a local gender consultant. (p. 36)

Furthermore, Rathgeber (2006) recommends the need for a gender action plan that is institutionalised at all levels of the Department of Technical Co-operation in order for the mainstreaming of gender to be effective. Mexico's recommendations resonate with those proposed by both Chile and Uganda. Seemingly, although there is a commitment to gender mainstreaming on paper, these paper rights are not being translated into reality. Patriarchy still dominates the daily operations of government departments (Gouws 1999; Lewis 1999; Prinsloo 1999; Watson 1997).

In the case of the Caribbean, a study was carried out by Harris, Kambon and Clarke (2000), funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, on 10 countries, namely, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. None of the machineries were originally constituted with a primary mandate as an advocacy unit to influence the planning processes across development sectors (Harris et al. 2000):

> Despite the rhetoric of gender mainstreaming, the machineries remain distant from the ministries of planning. (p. 14)

This implies that with the inability to influence planning in ministries, gender mainstreaming continues to be ineffectual because institutional mechanisms are absent from the process. Harris et al. (2000:15) further explain that although co-ordinators in the national machineries understand their functions and implementation responsibilities, their core responsibilities are hindered by the 'absence of clear powers to reject inappropriate policies emanating from other sectors of government bureaucracy'. They argue the need for the Caribbean to have a Gender Bureau instead of a Women's Bureau in order to mainstream issues of gender rather than those concerning women only, the latter having outlived its utility value as it faced too many barriers to implementation. Many of these barriers are shared by the South African State. The obstacles cited in the case above included (Harris et al. 2000):

- Uncertainty about the role of the bureau
- Poor access to human and financial resources
- Poor administrative capability within the public service bureaucracy
- Lack of co-operation of administrators in instrumental sectors of the economy
- Poor monitoring mechanisms. (p. 17)

The barriers as indicated by Harris, Kambon and Clarke (2017) resonate with the experience of GFPs in the South African State whose operational responsibility is to mainstream gender into the business of government. Notably, other countries face similar obstacles in the mainstreaming of gender.

Mehra and Gupta (2006:3) argue, however, that it is too soon to assess effectiveness of gender projects because much of the mainstreaming has not been supported to be realised. Many elements such as staffing and indicators are precursors to success. This research article argues that whilst indeed the precursors to the mainstreaming of gender need to be developed in order for mainstreaming to occur, there are further institutional mechanisms that need to develop, such as political will, resourcing and an enabling environment.

This article, therefore, posits that initiatives such as training and indicators are but smaller aspects of a larger picture that frames the goals of the public service as a whole towards gender mainstreaming and also unpacks the importance of working collaboratively with other departments, Chapter Nine Institutions and civil society. Mehra and Gupta (2006) noted an important point in the global debates of countries in the developing world, namely, the issue of operationalising gender mainstreaming. At the Fourth World Conference for Women in 1995, gender mainstreaming was adopted as a major strategy for gender equality; however, this is not an end in itself. Mainstreaming of gender at an operational level needs to take into account key drivers both within and outside government. This, in effect, means that governments need to mainstream gender into their work and a paradigm shift is needed to achieve this. From the cases discussed, it is noted that gender mainstreaming is adequately addressed at policy level and that glaring failings are evident at

implementation level. This can be seen, especially, in previously male-dominated arenas where patriarchal ideology prevails.

The case of Jamaica is also comparable to the South African experience of mainstreaming when one assesses how the implementation of gender mainstreaming was approached. The National Policy for Gender Equality (2010:19) stipulates the elements and pieces needed to enable the successful mainstreaming of gender into their society.

The Government of Jamaica (GOJ) shall establish GFPs in all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). Gender focal points shall act as responsibility centres in order to improve organisational effectiveness and capacity within the public sector. They shall develop, implement and monitor gender-sensitive policies, plans, programming and projects within their respective MDAs to contribute to the coordination of critical information needed to fulfil local, regional and international requirements. Gender focal points shall be of high enough rank to be able to be effective in their roles and for them to have consistent influence on their organisations. Each GFP shall be responsible for reporting their progress to the Permanent Secretary or Executive Officer of his or her MDA whilst also reporting on a quarterly basis to the Executive Director of the Bureau for Women's Affairs (BWA).

This experience is very similar to structures produced by the South African State in terms of the appointment of GFPs and the establishment of the BWA. However, what can be learnt from the Jamaican experience is the distinct difference in implementation. There is a clear need to regulate reporting at a political level and ensure that reporting does not remain at compliance level by ensuring that information is fed directly into the BWA which is the equivalent of the DoW in South Africa. This distinction ensures that the accurate statistical information and qualitative research can be informed for each sector in the fulfilment of local, regional and international commitments. The South African experience notes that the fulfilment of national and regional commitments tends to be compliance reporting, with a focus on local implementation of laws during public holidays as it is evidenced in the final subsection. The latter speaks about the need for the South African government to ensure that external and internal role players possess the political will through formal regulation to ensure the mainstreaming of international and regional commitments.

The comparative studies discussed above indicate that indeed there are similar barriers to the rollout of gender mainstreaming; however, this article does not only focus on the outcomes of policy but looks at process and ultimately offers a unique offering in that political will is assessed as the major influencing factor within a bureaucratic system. This article assesses the structures put in place to mainstream gender within the South African State and ultimately looks at how the bureaucracy can be circumvented through political will from both internal and external to the state structures.

The bureaucratisation of gender mainstreaming prevents successful implementation but lack of political will and accountability hide behind state structures. This will be assessed and discussed in detail in the next section.

Conclusions and recommendations

It is evident that the NGM was noble in intent; however, in the formulation of this body, the bureaucracy of the state has had a major impact on the ability of the NGM to fulfil its mandate. The lack of coordination and under-capacitation of the NGM, and specifically GFPs which play a major role in the implementation of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for gender equality, points to a deeper issue – political will. The entire NGM must undergo radical transformation and must reflect an ethical commitment to the implementation of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for gender equality. There is no driver for the NGM and in order to inspire this, a greater political will must be mustered from senior officials and key political heads, such as the ministers of the DoW and the Department of Public Service and Administration, to ensure that gender is placed on the national agenda.

Notably, the lack of integration of the NGM reveals a somewhat silent CGE and a Women's Movement that has become disillusioned with the state. This article notes that there is very poor interaction with the women's Movement and the CGE; this can and must be driven by the NGM. The current state of bureaucracy reflects that the NGM is somewhat caught in a labyrinth of red tape and cannot access its partners nor convene the once lively machinery with any great clout. The DoW must take the lead in reviving the NGM and ensure that the NGM fulfils its mandate through adequate resourcing and ultimately hold the South African State accountable for the prioritisation of gender equality.

The bureaucratisation of the NGM in South Africa is discussed with a specific focus on documenting the historical formation thereof. The article addresses the barriers to implementation and explains the evolution of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for gender equality. Key recommendations for the effective use of the structures of the NGM have been provided, with an emphasis on an integrated strategy for the furtherance of gender equality within the South African public service.

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Author(s) contributions

I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

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