

# Definition of gender mainstreaming essay sample



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“ Gender mainstreaming is a process not a goal” The UN Women training centre defines Gender mainstreaming as the 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. They further emphasize that 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 perpetrated.

Therefore the ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. According to a report by the European Commission (2012), in the European Union, as of beginning 2012, women constituted only 13. 7% of board seats. Even more dissatisfactory, women constitute only 3. 4% of chairs and presidents within the European Union. This clearly signifies that women are having a tough time managing to penetrate into the workplaces moreover taking decision making roles. Therefore gender mainstreaming is necessary so as to involve women in the organisations.

The following statement “ Gender mainstreaming is a process not a goal” means that it will take a while to put equality between men and women in the working environment as the process is not of high value as organisational as that of organisational goals. This is because women are facing global key challenges as they are not advancing enough to take leadership roles and contributing to influential decision making roles. This is because in some areas women are still being denied the rights to equal

amount of education same as men and this is because of cultural beliefs that women are not supposed to be educated.

Women are improving their professional opportunities, yet are still responsible for the majority of the chores and care giving duties, also known as the double burden syndrome. This syndrome is particularly experienced in the African and Asian regions, which reflects the responsibility for both work and household. European women are responsible for twice as many household tasks than the men McKinsey (2007) hence the issue of double burden highly affect them. A major problem relates to women's confidence, in both the beliefs in their own abilities, as well as in the capability of communicating confidence.

This will be discussed extensively in later sections. As an example, research amongst MBA women shows that while the majority of women consider themselves equally capable as their co-workers, the majority of men consider themselves more capable than their co-workers. In an environment where the behaviours expected are still male dominated, female-specific communication can be interpreted negatively.

Unfortunately, women do experience a strong gender bias when being evaluated for promotions on both their level of performance as well as their potential impact. Research within professional groups show that women have to significantly work harder to be perceived as equally competent as men. Moreover, unfortunate assumptions are sometimes made about women's ambitions and abilities. Research by DDI (Development Dimensions International, 2009) shows that women do not excel sufficiently in their

career due to assumptions on women's' ambitions such as women having less ambition and a lesser company commitment due to family responsibility.

Yet, women and men hardly differ in their ambitions. Catalyst shows that there is hardly a difference between senior men and women when aspiring for the highest roles in the company(Catalyst, 2004). However there are several benefits of gender mainstreaming in an organisation. Firstly women are the largest economic opportunity. Many institutions now recognise that women's growing affluence and influence cannot be ignored and have identified women as the next big market opportunity as they explore different ways of capturing and capitalizing on this ' market segment' to take advantage of the demographics.

Not only do women earn more than India and China combined, but also women globally control at least 64% of the consumer spending (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009b). Having women on boards will give corporations the competitive advantage to create products and services that will better meet their customers' needs. In some countries, women drive over 70% of household spending decisions but have many unmet needs from financial education and advice to providing products they require at key inflexion points in their lives: caused by divorce, death of a spouse, marriage, first home purchase, birth of a first child, college commencement, first job e. t. c (Accenture, 2006).

Therefore, the opportunity to win market share and create new markets are abundant. Moreover, given these demographic trends, corporate leadership should reflect the diversity of the customer base (George, 2012). According

to Barclays research (2013), women are creating their own wealth through earnings, savings and income from setting up business thus given rise to kitchen table tycoons.

Trends suggest an increase in self-employment where women are setting up both lifestyle and fast growth companies. Demographics suggest women are living longer than men and one impact of this is that they become beneficiaries of a double inheritance from both father and husband where the cultures and laws permit. Again, the financial advisory role is important to serve the unmet needs of this demographic and provides an opportunity to service this growing segment. Women often set up and manage businesses that are survival led and necessity driven, which tend to be for long term.

Women are shown to have positive effects that improve corporate performance. Catalyst (2007) compared Fortune 500 companies on the representation of women on their boards and their corporate performance. They found that when comparing the worst and best quartile of female representation this had significant effects on the corporate performance. Return on Equity increased by 53%, Profit Margin by 42%, and Return on Invested Capital by 66%. They also found that a minimum of three women on the board gave the best results. McKinsey (2007) confirms this relationship.

They find that companies with the highest gender diversity teams, as compared to the industry average, see a much higher Return on Equity (10%), a higher operating result (48%), and a stronger stock price growth (70%). In addition, having at least one woman on the board decreases

bankruptcy by a full 20% (Wilson & Atlantar, 2009). Interestingly, companies with more women on their boards see better corporate governance and ethical behaviour (Franke, 1997). In some western countries over 50% of graduates are women.

For instance, in the UK, more than 54% of the postgraduates were female (Office for National Statistics, UK). However, this is not the case for countries like India, Pakistan and South Africa, but surprisingly so in countries such as Saudi Arabia. An important instrument for ensuring the implementation of gender mainstreaming in an organisation is competence development, i. e. the development of awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity necessary to incorporate gender perspectives into substantive work among professional staff. Competence development can be achieved through many means, not only through training programmes.

Provision of materials such as fact-sheets and briefing notes, briefings by experts, brown-bag lunches, participatory development of materials on gender in different sector areas are all ways by which awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity for gender mainstreaming can be developed. Because women are looked down upon and at times this reduces their confidence in learning new things at workplaces, there is need for enhancing women`s performance through competence development.

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