

## A1.1 Case Study 3: Prompting Subtlety of Thought: Eight Attributes of Female Leadership Transforming Social Science Pedagogy in Higher Education Institutions Across Africa

### A1.1.1 Summary

This study identifies eight attributes of female leadership that has contributed to the success of the Pedagogical Leadership in Africa (PedaL) partnership, one of three SPHEIR projects addressing pedagogical reform. PedaL is a partnership between higher education institutes in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and the UK. Academics from these partner institutions have trained and established a network of teachers in African universities to transform graduate education by embedding innovative pedagogy within graduate social science programmes. The partnership is led by Dr Beatrice Muganda of Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) in Nairobi, Kenya. The PedaL approach represents a systemic shift from dominant traditional teaching models to more participatory, student-centred approaches. It is gender-sensitive and subject content integrates an analytical lens on power and inequality. Dr Muganda's leadership approach reframes what it takes to be a successful leader, to manoeuvre skilfully and to bring power on side, so as to expand opportunities for students to contribute to inclusive social and economic development.

### Annex Box 1: Case Study Methodology

- Literature review
- Review of results
- Interviews with PedaL partnership staff

### A1.1.2 Introduction

Addressing gender and other inequalities is not just a question of collecting statistics (gender disaggregated data) and gender analysis to understand who benefits, and why and whether gender balance will happen. For transformative change women have to play a role in setting the agenda and providing leadership. This is no simple feat in academic institutions where decision-making and leadership (globally) remains predominately male. Some feminists have pointed to leadership as a gendered concept, associated with power, privilege and strength (Grint 2011).<sup>1</sup> When women do take on a leadership role, their style is expected to be feminine, more democratic, participatory, and collaborative. Indeed, women who have adopted a more assertive or masculine approach have been criticised and penalised for not conforming to expectations (McColough 2011).<sup>2</sup>

Leadership, as Dr Linda Waldman points out, is a socially constructed process and different manifestations of it exist in different contexts.<sup>3</sup> We cannot assume that women have a unique feminine style. Each individual brings a diversity of approaches. If attention is placed solely on the leader, we ignore those who surround the leader, who may work unpaid and unrecognised in pushing the agenda forward in their own domains.<sup>4</sup> The SPHEIR portfolio

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<sup>1</sup> Grint, Keith. 2011. A history of Leadership. In Bryman, Alan and Collinson, David and Grint, Keith and Jackson, Brad and uhl-Bien, Mary, (eds). The SAGE handbook of Leadership, London.

<sup>2</sup> McCullough, Laura. Forum on Public Policy Online, v 2011. Women's Leadership in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Barriers to Participation.

<sup>3</sup> GenderinSite. 2018. Pathways to Success: Bringing a Gender Lens to the Scientific Leadership of Global Challenges. Waldman, Linda, Alice Abreu, Becky Faith, Tabitha Hrynich, Inés Sánchez de Madariaga, and Lucilla Spini.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

provides a useful window for exploring female leadership. What is important is to understand what attributes of leadership are transformative for gender relations and inclusive outcomes, and why. Equally important are the roles men play as co-workers, leaders and champions.

The case study begins by explaining what the PedaL partnership has achieved. It identifies attributes of female leadership but it also highlights the contributions of team members (women and men) who are themselves leaders, champions and mentors in their own institutions and who are expanding PedaL's outreach and maintaining its community of practice. We look at how power relations can change, what is achieved when they do change and how specific attributes of leadership can activate 'selfless' dedication which in turn produces results that go far beyond anticipated targets.

### **A1.1.3 Pedagogical Leadership in Africa**

PedaL has designed and is delivering a training programme which strengthens the capacities of university teaching staff to deliver social science graduate programmes using the PedaL pedagogy. PedaL uses a cost sharing approach. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme has quickly shifted its traditional face-to-face methods of delivering a one-year 'Core PedaL' training course to 'PedaL online'.

PedaL introduces lecturers to a 'suite of integrated interventions' across the design, context, processes and content of teaching and learning. It familiarises them with new pedagogical tools that include case studies, flipped classrooms where students give presentations, role plays and a range of problem-based learning activities aimed at maximising learning outcomes among students (men and women).

## **Annex Box 2: PedaL Partners**

### **The PedaL partners include:**

- **Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR based in Nairobi, Kenya);**
- **University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania);**
- **Egerton University (Kenya);**
- **University of Ibadan (Nigeria);**
- **Uganda Martyrs University (Private)**
- **University of Ghana**
- **The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at Sussex University (UK)**

IDS at Sussex University play a quality assurance role, providing technical advice to strengthen systems and processes for monitoring, evaluation and learning and the design, delivery and institutionalisation of pedagogical innovation across partnership universities.

### **A1.1.4 PedaL Achievements**

In the first two years, the programme trained 55 trainers (25 female, 30 male). These trainers then enhanced the teaching capacity of 1,089 educators (647 male and 442 female) from 60 universities across 10 African countries. The Uganda Martyrs University and Egerton University have successfully accredited the PedaL model as a training programme for educators, thus sustainably embedding the model. PedaL's engagement has reached 30,000 lecturers who in turn have reached a further 320,000 lecturers.

The PedaL model builds capacity at scale. It takes a 'training of trainers' approach, where core 'Resource Persons' (men and women) lead workshops and support promising participants to grow into the role of trainers. Trainers teach beyond their country of residence using on-line approaches. The original proposal only aimed to train staff at five universities but the approach has 'snowballed' and PedaL-trained teachers are voluntarily training other teachers to meet the growing demand from students in some universities to be taught the 'PedaL way'.

Feedback surveys from all PedaL training participants show an overwhelming level of satisfaction ranging from 95% to 99%. PedaL has also built traction for wider national and regional level reform to promote teaching

excellence. Furthermore, implementation surveys conducted in October 2019 and May 2020 revealed that at least 89% of the teaching staff who responded to the surveys are using PedaL approaches in their class room delivery. Within the implementing universities, PedaL pedagogy has been replicated beyond its original targets, across programmes (PhD, MA and Bachelors) and disciplines (social sciences, Arts and Humanities and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)). A benchmark of the programme's success is also the willingness of universities and individual teaching staff to cost-share in PedaL trainings.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, PedaL moved key aspects of its products online, and introduced modules to help design and deliver online teaching and assessment of learning. The new online course integrates all aspects of the PedaL approach except for two modules, education philosophy and leadership. All PedaL courses integrate gender.

### **A1.1.5 Leadership Attributes Driving Transformative Change**

The PedaL partnership is led by Dr Beatrice Muganda, a Black female academic, and Director of Higher Education at PASGR based in Nairobi. Her insights and those of Dr Linda Waldman from the IDS, the quality assurance partner, have facilitated an analysis of what attributes of female leadership contribute to transformative change in contexts where gender inequality is systemic, and where complex gender dynamics, and different ways of seeing gender and power relations need to be navigated at multiple levels. So, what kind of leadership attributes are required to do this? We identify eight important attributes.

#### **Leaders Pursue a Vision Selflessly and Inspire the Same from Team Members**

Many leaders profess to have a vision, but perhaps fewer pursue that vision, selflessly and are able to persuade team members to do the same through example. 'Money is not the object, it's the vision,' says Dr Muganda. 'They (the Resource Persons) make sacrifices; they put in a lot of pro bono work.' She notes that opportunity costs are high. The team make sacrifices. Dr Muganda adds, 'We cannot take advantage (or) take this selflessness for granted'. In this sense, selflessness implies a collective way of working, inspired by a leader to go beyond a call of duty. Selflessness in this leadership approach is acknowledged and appreciated, rather than demanded and expected.

The shared vision is that PedaL pedagogy 'will be a norm, a standard, synonymous with quality higher education' across Africa, says Dr Muganda. 'PedaL will be part of what universities offer and they will allocate resources for it.' At an operational level, Dr Muganda's vision for PedaL is to ensure gender and other inequalities are seen and integrated into all teaching and learning subject contexts to effect systemic change.

Dr Muganda is clear on the future challenge: 'PedaL has to cut across all subjects. We will deliver a STEM product that integrates gender. University leaders are asking for it.' Gender inequalities associated with STEM subjects are well known, globally. Dr Muganda knows that if STEM pedagogy and subject matter is gender sensitive, it will 'touch' women and their disadvantage.

#### **Eliciting Team Buy-In**

A critical aspect of Dr Muganda's leadership is eliciting buy-in from team members and stakeholders who adopt the PedaL approach. Dr Waldman notes that Dr Muganda has 'made PedaL trendy and exciting.' People want to be part of it. At a macro level, Beatrice seeks buy-in to the concept that it's 'time for African countries to change' outdated pedagogy and subject content. Inclusive discussion is a key part of eliciting buy in. But other approaches are also required: 'I do not impose,' says Dr Muganda. 'I make connections; I harness what everyone has to bring.' Eliciting buy in within the team, and from a broader platform has, in her view, 'helped us go beyond our targets'.

Dr Waldman notes significant shifts in the balance of power within the partnership. It is more usual for the IDS, an institution from the Global North to take a lead technical role but in PedaL, 'we are not in control,' says Dr Waldman. 'There is this sense of power reversal. Black women are being heard, they are leading, the room is predominantly

black. It's amazing'. In the UK, there are just 99 black women professors out of a total of 20,000.<sup>5</sup> Those involved in PedaL from the Global North now see a different reality.

### **Carrying People Along in an Evolving Process**

Dr Muganda describes her leadership role as being the person who 'shares the direction, and who carries others along'. The process is complex and it requires in Dr Waldman's words a 'phenomenal level of skills.' These skills encompass in-depth subject knowledge but also programme management; skills in monitoring, evaluation and learning; establishing and maintaining communities of practice, and feedback loops; skills in policy advocacy and negotiation to secure cost sharing partnerships; rapid programme adaptation (e.g., in the light of COVID-19) and meeting demands from universities outside the partnership.

Other skills are well known leadership attributes - team building and complex people-management skills - but in PedaL these skills are being exercised by a woman in a context where there are systemic gender inequalities. The PedaL team of Resource Persons comprises 70% women academics and 30% men. Team cohesion is not automatic. It's a process that involves 'heated discussion' including on the fine nuances around inequality, including gendered meanings and identity, complex gender relations, power, hidden agendas and unconscious bias. Not everyone shares the same view or sees these issues in the same way. Dr Muganda says it is her role to nudge everyone along. There are members of the team, male and female who are high-level academic experts in their own right. '(Men and women) have accepted my leadership,' says Dr Muganda.

### **Prompting Subtlety of Thought**

'Prompting a subtlety of thought' is an approach Dr Muganda uses to grow the team and the trainers of trainers. She does not believe in confronting people with what they do not yet know or understand. Rather, she looks for avenues through which to deepen knowledge, making connections between people who can serendipitously and unobtrusively 'deepen' thinking. Dr Waldman highlights Dr Muganda's skills in identifying entry points to do this. 'It's done in part through feedback (as part of quality assurance), but in other ways too.' It's a delicate process that doesn't undermine.

### **Problem-Solving Through Inclusive Discussion**

Feminists have long criticised the tendency of male leaders to hold critical business discussions with male colleagues, out of the office, and after work, to the exclusion of women. In contrast, inclusive discussion plays a key role in Dr Muganda's leadership approach. Dr Waldman notes that everyone is encouraged to talk, to discuss 'until all issues are resolved'. She notes that PedaL is not always 'unproblematic'. The team face problems, and the best way to solve them is in Dr Muganda's view to constantly reinforce the message that if you have a problem, 'come and talk.'

Inclusive discussion is also the tool that resolves differences of opinion around conceptual approaches to, for example, gender, power and inequality. Dr Waldman cautions against assuming team dissonance stems from male team members when it comes to new ways of thinking around inequality. Women too can struggle with the complexities of these concepts. What matters is discussion, the airing of views and the finding of a consensus.

This inclusive approach to dialogue and problem solving infuses the way gender is taught, whether in anthropology or sociology. 'We use case studies to provoke discussion,' says Dr Muganda. 'One example concerns female genital mutilation.' Discussing cases helps teachers and students find a way of seeing with a gender lens and to find solutions for gender equality and empowerment. It's also an integral shift from traditional ways of teaching and learning to participatory approaches.

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<sup>5</sup> Runnymede Trust March 2017. Black Female Professors in the UK.

## **A Nurturing Approach to Build Leadership Skills**

A team leader that nurtures helps team members grow, learn, develop and act together in confidence. Dr Muganda says, 'I bring a quality of nurturing into my leadership style; it's who I am'. But in this assertion, she is also reclaiming a female stereotype as being an essential attribute for all leadership, regardless of gender. Dr Muganda's nurturing approach is directed at growing confident PedaL resource persons across partner universities. 'We identify the quick learners in the training of trainers programme; those who are enthusiastic and committed.' As the trainers gain confidence, they in turn play a lead role in their institutions, introducing new pedagogy and challenging accepted practice.

Most of the women leaders who have attended the training of trainers' courses have, according to Dr Muganda have 'taken PedaL to their universities in a big way. When plans are made to train 30 people, we end up training 100'. A nurturing approach does not overlook or disregard what the team has to offer. Dr Waldman observes that Dr Muganda 'instils the notion that (the team) is a family'. Those whom Dr Muganda has nurtured, are, according to Dr Waldman 'huge; they are so good; so impressive in their own right.' Good leadership nurtures good leadership.

### **Availability**

Dr Muganda makes herself 'available' to team members. PedaL resource people do the same. 'The training stops and resource people remain available to answer questions, and they do this long after the training engagement. They are ever present', says Dr Muganda. 'Our boundaries are open, we work a full day, and we work after hours, if required.' The dialogue amongst the PedaL community is never ending. It goes well beyond the initial feedback loop. There are now over 320,000 PedaL trainers in the community of practice engaging and supporting each other.

### **Diffuse Leadership that Negotiates and Influences**

As Dr Waldman notes, we cannot ignore those who surround the leader, who push the PedaL agenda forward in their universities. Dr Muganda reels off a handful of names, including Dr Antoinette Tsiboe-Darko a young geography academic who has facilitated the uptake of PedaL in the University of Ghana. It is the tough message that she has delivered that so impresses Dr Muganda. 'Just think about what's she done: she's gone to far older, more experienced and senior academics (men) with the message: things can improve; you can improve; and she's packaged this in a way that gets a result.' She adds, 'You have to be prepared to go up against some real hardliners. It takes patience, negotiation and time.'

#### **A1.1.6 Conclusion**

This case study has identified attributes of female leadership driving forward PedaL's gender sensitive pedagogical approach for the social sciences in African universities. The approach tackles the unconscious bias and hidden agendas in teaching and learning, and it integrates a gender lens and lens on inequality more broadly into social science subject content. Female leadership attributes may look similar to standard leadership approaches but as this case study shows, they are different because they have to contend with power from a position of disadvantage. As Linda Waldman points out, female leadership is also expected to live up to gendered norms to be more inclusive, more nurturing but at the same, get the job done. This case study examines eight attributes of female leadership that yield lessons for everyone.