

TOWARDS A GENDER-SENSITIVE FRAMEWORK FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION  
IN PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF AN EXECUTIVE  
MBA/MPA PROGRAM

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Program planning is a vital activity for any organization. Over the years, many scholars have looked into the complex process of planning. Different models and frameworks of program planning have been studied in adult education and in distance education in particular, but little research in the field has been done from a gender perspective. This forms a challenge which I begin to address with this thesis.

Qualitative research methods including interviews, observations and document analysis were used in this case study. The study endeavored to develop an understanding of how gender-sensitivity can become part of adult education programming in a distance education organization. My research focused on the Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration program (MBA/MPA) which is offered in part through in the Global Learning for Development (a pseudonym for an international educational institution promoting distance education for development) and Indira Gandhi National Open University. A total of ten Global Learning for Development staff members, past and present were interviewed. Of these ten, three were present at the time the program started and were directly involved in the planning process of the program. All others provided contextual information on the organization's gender policy approach and the Executive MBA/MPA program. This research endeavoured to uncover the planning processes of the above mentioned program.

Findings of the study confirmed that the organization as a whole has started adopting gender-sensitive policy and program planning within its internal processes of shared responsibility and decision-making. In particular, it has begun to create strategies and practices to actively engage men in gender-equality work within the organization's policy

and program interventions. In the MBA/MPA program, however, the research found that little attention was paid to learners' differing needs and interests, especially those of women. This undermined the credibility and outcomes of the program. The question arose of whether decision-makers see the creation of gender-sensitive distance education programs as a problem which needs to be addressed in every step of the planning process, or, alternately, if they perceive it as an issue of little importance.

Building on the results of the study of the institution's program planning process, the thesis proposes a general gender-sensitive framework for the distance education planning process. The framework is inspired by the Harvard Analytical and the Moser Frameworks of gender analysis, respectively (Leach, 2003). In the proposed model, there are eight steps in the planning process, starting from the policy framework, on to situational analysis, identification of problem and consultation, aims and objectives, possibilities, implementation and evaluation. In each step, a gender perspective is identified, and the analysis applied to data on the GLD program planning process. The foregoing framework is viewed as a flexible tool. The thesis intends not only to contribute a gender perspective to program planning theory, but also to design a framework to be applied in actual practice. In addition to the framework, recommendations further research and improvements on current practice for program planning are offered.

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## ACRONYMS

AIOU .....	Allama Iqbal Open University
BOU .....	Bangladesh Open University
MBA/MPA .....	Master of Business Administration/ Master of Public .....Administration
CHOGM .....	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
GLD .....	Global Learning for Development
GAD .....	Gender And Development
IGNOU .....	Indira Gandhi National Open University
MOU .....	Memorandum of Understanding
ODL .....	Open Distance Learning
OUSL .....	Open University of Sri Lanka
PoA .....	Commonwealth Plan of Action
RCS .....	Royal Commonwealth Society
TCF .....	Toronto-Calcutta Foundation
UN .....	United Nations
UNHCHR .....	United Nations High Commission for Human Rights
WAD .....	Women And Development
WAMM .....	Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting
WID .....	Women In Development

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## **DISCLAIMER CLAUSE**

This work and its conclusions are solely that of the author. Neither Global Learning for Development, its employees, past and present, agents or associates, are in any way responsible or liable for any or all conclusions or assessments of their program and policy, partners or any other part of this thesis. Any or all interviews done or information provided by this agency or its employees, agents or partners, were solely for the information of the author.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### Background

How can we address gender issues in distance education programs in international development? There are a number of wider conceptual aspects that frame gender principles in development projects. One of the most important is globalization. The forces of globalization have reconstructed the international and local contexts in which the practices and policies of adult education are being debated and designed. In this debate, there are many who have reacted against the global incorporation of gender issues into the development agenda of adult education, contending that it reflects a Western colonial bias and indicates opposition to appropriate local social relations.

Early on, Rogers (1980) attacked a Western male bias in development planning in her book, *The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies*. She pointed out that the staff of international organizations has been dominated since World War II by men with Western educational backgrounds. This has limited the diversity in development planning. More important is the fact that Third World women have very little control of development at any level. This is reflected in postcolonial narratives that have taken up the question of representation, which has had an ongoing influence on the discourse of development.

Scholars from the South like Spivak (1988) initiated a focus on the difficult issue of representation of the 'global south' woman in Western feminist discourses and political practices. Mohanty (1991) focused on the inclination to reduce the heterogeneity of the 'Third World' women into a single monolithic subject, a habit that is conceived of as a discursive Colonization. Her book *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial*

*Discourses* is a critical look at social constructions of Third World Women in the writings on gender and development by researchers trained within Western feminist scholarship. These scholars have tended to erase historical and geographical specificity. Some scholars from the global North, like Sachs (1999), believe industrial production in the North (in the context of a civilizational transformation in Western society) could support a sustainable approach towards efficiency and sufficiency in the South, making possible a more just and equitable relationship to the masses of the South. But this argument also holds to an enlightened faith in the capacity of industry to overcome scarcity.

Whether or not the challenge for creating a gender-sensitive adult education program is taken up depends on whether the decision-makers see this as a problem which needs to be addressed directly, or whether they perceive it as a less important issue subordinate to development as a whole. Using the term 'Outsider', I am trying to make an attempt to rethink adult education looking at gender. I want to develop a theoretical framework as to how gender influences developmental work in general, and specifically, how it affects projects and programs of distance education between cross-national institutions in this globalized world.

## **Rationale**

There are many scholars in the adult education field who have looked into the complex process of program planning, starting from design to implementation and evaluation (Tyler, 1949; Boone, 1985; Sork, 2000). Although the identification of strategies and action plans as gender principles are often discussed, these are seldom applied in program planning research. This is true even though 'a commitment to social justice has a long history in the

field of adult education' (Sparks & Butterwick, 2004, p. 276). We wonder why few women have contributed to scholarship in the area of program planning.

Conceptualising adult education from distance education perspectives has also been an evolving field of educational practice. The face of distance education has changed drastically in the last decade due to globalization and the advent of advanced information and communications technologies (ICTs). These have altered many institutions' approaches to program planning. But there are a number of problems related to the social processes and purposes of adult distance education that need to be re-examined.

Cross-border distance education is an example of the convergence of theory and practice; the idea of distance education put into practice (Bates, 1991). Programmes offered by an institution of one country can be followed by students of other countries. Yet it does not follow that the educational possibilities of distance technology will necessarily recognize the diversity of educational goals and learners. Thach (1994), for example, documents a lack of research in the area of distance education planning competencies, which can then lead to ineffective programs. In regard to international distance education programs, not much literature exists to show that these are designed after doing cross-border needs analysis.

In general, distance education designers and subject specialists are hampered in their efforts by poorly defined development models and a dearth of heuristics for effective design (Schieman, Teare & McLaren, 1992), thus also ignoring gender sensitivity in distance education. A key factor of a failure to integrate gender issues into distance education is an absence of concrete tools designed to meet the particular needs of the population. Distance education programs would benefit from research defining the necessary roles and competencies of the planners including the capacity for gender analysis (Williams, 2003).

The Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration program (MBA/MPA) of the Global Learning for Development (a pseudonym) is an excellent example of a cross-border distance education consortium between North and South. It exists through a viable program offered by open universities of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The GLD partner in India; namely, Indira Gandhi National Open University is a pioneer in Distance Education. As one mark of its success, in 1993, it was the recipient of the Centre of Excellence in Distance Education award conferred by Global Learning for Development. The website GLD website reflects the organization's purpose of activities.

*The Global Learning for Development is an intergovernmental distance education agency created by the Commonwealth Heads of the Government that encourages the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.*

*GLD is not an educational institution and does not register students and does not directly offer courses, programmes of study, scholarships or bursaries. [The organization's] focus is in strengthening institutions in developing Commonwealth countries that are striving to provide affordable education to larger numbers of their citizens.*

Global Learning for Development focuses on using technology to help policy makers, administrators and practitioners implement development plans and programmes, and using distance education in gender and culturally-sensitive ways to address educational and training priorities. GLD thus serves as a rich analytical site for a gender analysis of program planning.

### **Personal Context**

My interest in studying gender and development began when I was working as a program planner in the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation (TCF), an Indo-Canadian non-governmental organization in India. The website [www.toronto-calcutta.org](http://www.toronto-calcutta.org) provides

information on the organization's activities. This organization helps to alleviate poverty in Calcutta and its surrounding areas, and funds, supports and manages projects that address local needs related to health, education and employment skills. In partnership with local communities, it is working towards sustainable development. Program supports have been obtained from the Canadian International Development Agency.

Before joining TCF, my knowledge regarding the development of gender-sensitive programs was limited. But I was enthusiastic in exploring the processes by which planners define local people's needs. I wanted to know how peoples' needs emerged as program needs, and the part played by the planner. However, I could see that the organizational structure of TCF represented a patriarchal structure with no women in the higher level positions and very few within the organization as a whole. In fact, the gender gap at the organizational and community level between men's paid work and women's unpaid voluntary labour can be seen extensively within many NGOs in India (Moser, 1993). I began to wonder how other women program planners in other organizations understand local needs and interests and negotiate to develop and implement gender-sensitive educational programs.

When planning adult education programs it is important to take into consideration the perspective that women in the developing world appear to have 'needs' and 'problems, but few if any have 'choices' or 'freedom' to act. Further, my organization had previously planned programs for women, but took women as a homogenous group, bypassing age, caste and religious differences within this group. According to Chandra Mohanty (1991), homogenization is problematic without acknowledgment of women's diversity. Universal principles of gender and development cannot be applied uncritically across region, culture, class, and ethnicity (Ong, 1988). This is connected to the lack of gender-sensitive

development policies which consider women as a 'group' not defining their age, religion and caste. In short, it cannot be assumed that in all the developing world women have similar problems and needs.

Such simplistic formulations of needs are ineffective in the long-term strategies of program planning. Therefore, within the described organizational structure, I found myself negotiating needs and interests of women while explaining and justifying the educational programs for the adults almost on the daily basis. This is how I came to want to learn how gender effects planning and development and decided to come to Canada. It was a 'migration by choice'.

Apart from my previous work experience, coming to UBC as an 'Outsider', pursuing a degree in Adult Education, and taking different interdisciplinary courses, especially in Women Studies, made me think of the affinity between feminist research and cross-disciplinary work. I think the ability to connect disciplines may reflect a more general sense of connectedness. Today the spectrum of epistemological and methodological positions among feminists is much broader than in the past. Feminist scholars work within and across epistemologies and disciplines; often combining elements from different perspectives (Fonow & Cook, 2005). My study at UBC also made me more aware of the role of globalization in increasing interaction and creating opportunities for new learning. It became obvious to me that boundaries in time and space are being crossed with great ease through distance learning. According to Mugridge (1992), 'distance education is not a fixed strategy, but rather a symbol for diversity, flexibility and access...' (p. 2).

One such clear example of globalized distance education is the Global Learning for Developments' Executive MBA/MPA program offered in the Indira Gandhi Open

University, India. As noted above, focusing on programmes offered in the Indira Gandhi Open University (IGOU) highlighted the fact that this university's academic programs have crossed global and educational boundaries. The university is now a 'mega-university' in India, with 1.3 million learners offered 108 different programmes (Garg, Venkaiah, Puranik & Panda, 2006).

Global Learning for Development (GLD) provides guidance to member countries like India to develop policies and systems that institutions such as Indira Gandhi Open University need to extend the benefits of education. GLD does not as a rule plan programs. In fact, the MBA/MPA program is the only program which was initiated by GLD, in response to a demand for a professional management training program in South Asia.

My positionality as a woman coming from India made me more interested in knowing about this program and its progress in India. My practical experiences as well as what I have been learning in my graduate program in Canada have led me to write this thesis on post colonial gender-sensitive frameworks for program planning in development contexts. Therefore, 'successfully completing' this study not only gave me a personal sense of accomplishment, but also provided me with positive mind-set towards conducting further research on gender and development issues in future.

### **Epistemological and/ or Ontological Position**

Questions of identity that often affect me as a diasporic individual made me ponder how I should start to write. In order to identify my epistemological and/ or ontological position and do justice to the study and to my informants, I view myself as a woman from the 'Third World', informed by my country of origin. The word 'Third World' is frequently applied in two ways in the literature. The first refers to 'underdeveloped'/overexploited

geopolitical entities, and the second to oppressed nationalities from these world areas who are now resident in 'developed' 'First World' countries. Immigrants like me, residing in First World countries, are minorities. A number of scholars in the West have written about the inherently political definition of the term *women of colour*, but for *me* what seems to constitute 'women of colour' or 'Third World women' as a viable oppositional alliance is a common context of struggle rather than colour or racial identifications.

Even though I know the term 'Third World' is problematic, I think the term aptly defines an aspect of my identity. Acknowledging my location and identity represents an attempt to produce more accountable and responsible writing. More importantly, the question of 'insider' or 'outsider' represented my identity in the structure and process of the fieldwork. There were some advantages to my insider/outsider position in approaching GLD for my thesis research. I worked in this organization on a short project last year and therefore had to deal with the fluidity and ambiguity of establishing boundaries between myself and my subjects during the course of my fieldwork. In reality, within the research situation, the boundaries were more entrenched, yet they also constantly shifted more than I could have initially imagined. I attempted to position myself as a 'partial insider' through my own experiences during my field work. By being forced to balance an insider/outsider perspective on a daily basis, I ultimately became more sensitive to my informants' voices and experiences. My experiences in the field turned into a personal journey of reflection and analysis. Through the course of my research, I believe that my understanding and sensitivities have been heightened with respect to gender issues in planning programs.

## **Problem Statement and Research Questions**

As noted above, there are a number of writers in adult education who have looked into the complex process of planning, starting from design to implementation and evaluation. Approaches to program planning have changed over the years. However, echoing the trend in international development, we can see that most of the research and writing done in this area is done by scholars from the global North, or 'First World.' According to Sork and Newman (cited in Foley, 2004) stated that '... some might even say [the global North has] colonized—this corner of the field' (p.97).

In the contemporary planning literature, there is little research on program planning from a feminist perspective. According to Hooper and Ritzdorf (cited in Sork, 2000) '[Gender] critiques of planning have also challenged the legitimacy of conventional planning theory based largely on the exclusion of women from its development and the absence of gender as an important consideration' (p.174). A key factor in this failure to integrate gender issues into the planning of distance education programs is an absence of concrete tools designed to meet the particular needs of the population. To help address this gap, I undertook a gender analysis of the Global Learning for Development's Executive MBA/MPA programme, offered in the Indira Gandhi National Open University, India.

Global Learning for Development's recent three-year plan (2003-2006) mentions that it is a unique organization distinguished by several key characteristics focusing on distance education for international development (GLD, 2006). Most importantly, one of these characteristics is that GLD is 'sensitive to gender issues in all of its programme activities' (p. 7). The purpose of my research is to understand all aspects of the planning process pertaining to a gender analysis in the Executive MBA/MPA programme.

The vision of Indira Gandhi Open University is to advance the frontiers of knowledge by providing a flexible system of distance education to meet the challenges of access and equity and work towards the development of a knowledge-based society (Garg, Venkaiah, Puranik & Panda, 2006). In particular, my study tries to generate a greater understanding of how the gender-sensitive policy approach outlined by Global Learning for Development could be implemented in the Executive MBA/MPA distance education program. I wanted to understand how different program stakeholders such as those in Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) believe that gender sensitive program initiatives could be addressed and implemented in the MBA programme. There are three research questions for the study:

1. How did gender-sensitivity become part of GLD policy and program organizationally?
2. Which stakeholders were involved in the planning process of the MBA/MPA program and how were their needs and interests negotiated?
3. How can the planning framework be more gender-sensitive?

### **Overview of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 has discussed the context of this study, its purposes, the author, and research questions. Chapter 2 is a literature review comprised of an analysis of the empirical and theoretical research that relates directly to an understanding of the problem of gender analysis in development, program planning, and distance education. Chapter 3 first describes Global Learning for Development's vision of gender and development in its policy initiatives in general, and in MBA/MPA program offered in the IGNOU specifically. Chapter 3 then focuses on the research methodology and provides information on the selection of site, participants, data collection, analysis and limitations. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the

findings from interview sessions and other data sources. Chapter 5 is the proposed gender-sensitive framework, inspired by Harvard Analytical and Moser's gender analysis frameworks. Chapter 6 comprises conclusions drawn from the findings, recommendations and suggestions for further research and practice.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The literature review herein is an analysis of the empirical and theoretical research that relates directly to an understanding of the problem of gender analysis in development, program planning, and distance education. Thus, the four sections are (a) evolution of gender analysis: changing perspectives : (b) evolution of program planning: (c) gender-sensitive development planning: and (d) engendering cross-border distance education planning.

### **Evolution of Gender Analysis: Changing Perspectives**

To understand the changing perspectives of the Women In Development, Woman And Development and Gender And Development approaches, I have mapped the domain of development through discourses of feminist scholars from the North and South. This helps to elaborate on the basic structures of these approaches and offers some critical insights.

#### Northern Perspectives

The international development agencies have taken decades to realize women's invisibility and exclusion from the development agenda. Over the last decade, the importance of the involvement of women in development processes has slowly crept into the agendas of national and international development agencies. Scholars have mapped the domain of distinctions among streams of feminist discourse regarding gender and development (Saunders, 2002). There are three distinct approaches in this field: Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD). Boserup (1970) was the first scholar who challenged the traditional 'gender-neutral' approach, and noted women's exclusion from development projects; thus signaling the Women and

Development (WID) approach. Boserup's (1970) book *Women's Role in Economic Development* inspired new thinking among feminists in the field of development.

The WID approach was a major breakthrough for women. Before, resources had not been allotted especially for women in development planning. On the one hand, it was the first time international organizations started thinking of injecting gender equality into development planning; but on the other, there were widespread doubts about this approach for essentializing the notion of women as a group. Young (1993), in her book, *Planning Development with Women: Making a World of Difference*, mentioned the fact that the WID approach targeted only women and generally focused on strengthening the status of women as a means to claim gender equality. WID was 'based on the assumption that women can be sole agents of their destiny without any corresponding change in or reaction from men' (Young, 1993, p. 130).

As the oldest and most dominant perspective, WID has had a strong influence on the direction of the field. In critiquing the WID approach, Molyneux (cited in Moser, 1993) pointed out that gender issues are necessarily women's issues, yet gender planning cannot be free from class conflict, and differences in race, ethnic groups and nationality. It is difficult to generalize women's interests and set priorities because various categories of women might be affected differently on account of their social position and identities. However, women have certain general interests in common. Molyneux differentiated between 'women's interest', strategic gender interest and practical gender interest, and articulated the false homogeneity imposed by the notion of women's interests. Molyneux (cited in Moser, 1993) noted that, from a planning perspective, this separation is essential because of its focus on the planning

process whereby an *interest* defined here as a ‘prioritized concern’ translates into a *need* (p. 37).

Building on Molyneux’s concept, Moser (1993) evaluated each development approach in terms of its ability to meet the practical and strategic needs of women. She also introduced the concepts of gender roles and gender needs, and policy approaches to gender and development planning. Here, Moser concentrated on women’s gender roles rather than dealing with power and relationships. But there is a need to identify different forms of power and influence and their relation with the political and cultural contexts. Moser’s approach supports women’s empowerment but does not mention other forms of inequality based on discrimination by such as class, race or ethnicity. This approach is static and needs flexibility to change over time. Developed by Longwe (1998), the empowerment approach brings out issues of participation and control in a political framework, linking them with women’s power to change their own condition and position in society. There is a growing trend within the development field to draw on the concept of gender, because its social construction and cultural context provides a rich information base for understanding gender relations and interactions (Ostegaard, 1992).

The GAD approach focuses on gender relations and is a lesson learned from the limitations of WID and WAD approach. This approach was constructed around some key points: those women are incorporated in the development process but in very specific ways; the focus of women alone was insufficient for a change. This GAD approach recognizes women’s needs and interests, and the social relations between men and women, in the workplace and other settings. GAD focuses on gender relations as a category of analysis and recognizes men as potential supporters of women. Moreover this approach focuses on both

men and women to achieve gender equality. Most recently, Fiona Leach (2003) in her book, *Practising Gender Analysis in Education*, explores how to carry out gender analysis in the context of educational settings within the developing world. In this, Leach makes a key 'contribution to ongoing efforts at gender mainstreaming in education by providing accessible tools for carrying out gender-sensitive analysis...' (p. 1). Thus, development planners are taking the lead in creating gender-analysis frameworks in different areas of development practice by using gender as a category of analysis. Even though development agencies and scholars have focused on the term GAD and use of the word 'gender' as a substitute for 'woman', it is often confusing because the word gender is complex and often difficult to translate. Therefore, it is important to think how to continue women-only project and at the same time make a sustained effort to galvanize men?

### Southern Perspectives

The Women In Development, Woman And Development and Gender And Development approaches represent viewpoints of mostly northern scholars and the southern institutions and individuals who work with them. Mohanty (1991) has mentioned the fact that Northern feminist scholars are dominant worldwide because of biases favouring them in communication, media and publishing. By contrast, Southern scholars' independent strategies of resistance to male domination have gone unnoticed. Kabeer (1994) noted that prior to 1975, and the United Nation's Decade for Women, less than one percent of standard textbooks on development referred specifically to women, and that 'development planning has been about men, by men and for men' (p. xi). Aid planning was more of a top-down approach with little or no involvement of recipients in planning and implementation. Thus Southern voices were absent.

According to Visvanathan (1997) in the mid-1980s at the end of the UN Decade for Women, members of a southern feminist research network, Development Alternatives for a New Era (DAWN) come together and worked for the empowerment of women through their writings on development's impact on women. They popularized the concept of empowerment, which has been cited by Moser as a WID policy stance. But widespread use of this 'empowerment' concept in mainstream development discourse has however distorted its original meaning (changing power relations). Northern scholars have often used the term 'education' and 'employment' as empowering instruments. But in the Indian context, for example, the term 'empowerment' emphasized the changing of power relations through individual challenges to patriarchal relations or group resistance to oppressive practices (Bhatt, 1989).

In later years, examining structuralist perspectives on women and development, Kabeer and Subrahmanian (2000) made an attempt to promote an understanding of the deeply-entrenched institutionalized nature of gender inequalities and the power relations in the policy domain. As they make clear, gender awareness in policy design is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for ensuring gender equity in the policy process. But it is also potential to address the question of representation which has had an ongoing influence on the discourse of development. Women are not a homogenous group. Representation of women has been particularly problematic in colonial and even postcolonial texts, because there is a crucial assumption that all of us of the same gender, across classes and cultures, and can be socially constituted as a homogenous group. This is an assumption that characterizes much Western feminist discourse. Clearly, Western feminist discourse and political practice is neither singular nor homogeneous in its goals, interests or analysis.

In the article, '*Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*', Mohanty (1997) analysed the construction of the so-called Third World Woman as a singular monolithic subject' in Western feminists' texts. 'What is problematic about this kind of women as a group, as a stable category of analysis, is that it assumes an ahistorical, universal unity between women based on a generalized notion of their subordination. .... this analytical move limits the definition of the female subject to gender identity, completely bypassing social class and ethnic identities' (p.83). This is problematic because it assumes that women are a coherent group or category prior to their entry into the social, cultural and family structure. The category constituted by Western feminists highlights their political interest and establishes 'Third World Women' as uniformly oppressed and powerless, thus leaving Western feminists as the true subjects of history (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). The essentialist characterization of the Third-World-Woman-as-victim serves simultaneously to define the first world woman as liberated, rational, and competent. Mohanty (2004) mentioned that the marginalization of female 'Other' is also problematic. 'In other words, it is only insofar as "woman/women" and "the East" are defined as others, or as peripheral, that (Western) man/ humanism can represent him/itself as the centre (pp. 41-42). This is clearly problematic because most of the colonial discourse is produced by male writers. Mohanty (2004) went on to say that 'it is not the centre that determines the periphery, but the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the centre' (p.42).

Scholars like Spivak (1988) also initiated a focus on the difficult issue of representation of the Third World woman in Western feminist discourses and political practices. Spivak focused on the issue of how the female 'subaltern' should be represented. What kind of representation would counter the images of the co-called Third World women

that appear in the world media? Spivak also suggested fluidity as opposed to fixed categories that reduce identity to essentialist notions. Thus focusing on the fundamental shift from the essentializing (fixed) notions of identity to more fluid and 'nuanced' representation.

### **Evolution of Program Planning**

In the field of adult education, approaches to program planning have changed over the years. However, echoing the trend in international development, we can see that research and writing in the field is by scholars mostly from the North.

Beginning with Tyler in the 1940s, and continuing through the 1950s and 1960s, Northern program planning models were traditionally based on Western technical-rationality (Wilson & Cervero, 1997). Scientifically-based, the technical-rational model of program planning evolved from behaviourist ideas, and encouraged logical procedures and a linear development of program planning. Tyler's model is based on four primary components: 1) educational purpose 2) learning contents, 3) organizing learning contents, and 4) evaluation (Sork, 2000). His model has become a dominant metaphor in adult education programme planning. Tyler's book *Basic Principle of Curriculum and Instruction* was designed for school-based curriculum and focuses on linear stepwise planning process starting from learner needs to accessing program outcomes. However, it fails to address social, political and ethical aspects of planning. This approach has a drawback as it does not address real-life activity that planners might face. It proposes four main questions which Tyler suggests guide the planning process, but offers no concrete activity. The technical-rational approach to program planning has in fact received a lot of criticism, yet this approach has remained largely unchanged for forty years.

By the late 1990s, Wilson and Cervero (1997) emerged as prominent critics of the technical-rational model of program planning, and began to break from its conceptual and theoretical tradition. Wilson and Cervero (1997) stated that, ‘the apparent variety of program planning models through the 1980s is more figurative than real, for the theories vary only in technical details, not in technical rational logic’ (p. 96). They view program planning as a social activity in which social context and institutional constraints influence every aspect of the planning process. In fact, planners may face constraints within the organizational structure where planning is to take place.

There is abundant literature that focuses on the definition of needs. According to Witkin and Altschuld (cited in Sork, 2002), ‘a need is generally considered to be a discrepancy or gap between ‘what is’, or the present state of affairs in regard to the group and situation on interest, and ‘what should be’, or a desirable state of affairs’ (p.101). Historically, adult student’s continuing education has attracted no special attention and was rarely studied nor viewed as constituting a special class with distinctive needs. Even in contemporary times the needs of adult learners have been taken for granted or alternately viewed as either at-risk burdens or cash-cow boons. Sork (2002) in the article *Needs Assessment* notes that ‘... not everyone accepts the notion that programs should or can be based on the ‘needs’ of adult learners’ (p. 100). Yet it is important for program planners to identify the needs of the learners because needs are translated into objectives of the planned program.

Boone (1985) emphasised the fact that assessing educational needs of a target population is a dynamic and complex process. Generally a programming model proposes an *active partnership* between the planners, decision-makers and the learners to identify needs and develop an educational program intended to help adult learners. But in practice the

approach works differently. In many organizations it is common to first define what they feel to be the target population's need and then offer a prescribed program. Therefore this top-down approach adversely affects the program.

Later on, Davidson (1995) pointed out that 'any discussion that is not specific about how knowledge of needs is influenced by determinants of productive and social relations has become suspect' (p. 186). It is very important to think of how and in what ways important clients or learners are defined. According to Scanlon & Schmitz (2001) 'Educators/program developers need to be more aware of adult learner's expectations and sensitivities...' (p.91). The necessity of making ethically informed choices in realizing needs of women while planning educational programmes is thus an important issue.

### **Gender-Sensitive Development Planning**

While there have been numerous publications about how to plan programs over the years, little research is available that responds to the needs of women in program planning. In the contemporary planning literature, there is little empirical research on program planning from a gender perspective, neither in planning theory nor in adult learning theory. Rahder and Altilia (2004), gender critiques have called into question the very nature of planning as a 'profession' with its dominatory execution and attendant masculine values (p. 108). In one such critique Valerie-Lee Chapman (Chapman & Sork, 2003), who considered herself a '...feminist- a person who has made a careful study of specific social and cultural structures, and believes that the women in them, largely because of their gender, have been inequitably treatment (p. 34). She shed light on how power, knowledge, identity difference and inequities are constructed or maintained in the educational institutions. Her major concern was how language and power work to construct subjectivities or categories of identities, and how

specific social and cultural structures work to reinforce inequalities for women (Ibid.). Sork (2003) mentioned that feminists are interested in creative and relational aspect of planning. This has led to refocusing the delivery of gender relations in program planning. Therefore, what is the current state of gender in development planning?

There is a trend towards greater gender inclusiveness in development work. There are varieties of gender planning frameworks based on differing approaches to gender analysis. These frameworks attempt to promote understanding of the roles, responsibilities, access to and control over resources of men and women in developmental projects. There are three main theoretical frameworks for integration of gender issues into development work; namely, the Harvard Analytical Framework, Moser's Framework and Longwe's Framework (Leach, 2003).

The Harvard Analytical Framework was developed by the Harvard Institute for International Development in collaboration with the WID office of USAID and is one of the earliest gender analysis and planning frameworks. The aim of this framework is to demonstrate the economic rationale for investing in women as well as men, to emphasize the importance of better information as the basis for meeting the efficiency/equity goal. The Harvard framework distinguishes between access and control over resources and '...allows planners and development workers to map the range of activities engaged in by men and women...' (Leach 2003, p. 36). In other words, it identifies who has access to the resources, who controls them and who enjoys the benefits that arise from their use. However, the most widely used framework is Caroline Moser's Empowerment framework. This framework focuses on the concepts of gender roles and gender needs, and policy approaches to gender

and development planning. Her concept of gender needs is widely recognized by those who want to integrate gender within the planning process.

Moser's framework defines practical and strategic needs, respectively, as 'the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in the society...[and] the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in the society' (Leach, 2003, p. 20). The identification of men and women's needs are of great importance when attempting to understand the potential opportunities and constraints of a group and focus on its targeted development. Even though immediate or practical needs of women may be a direct result of women's subordinate position in the society, addressing these does not directly challenge gender inequalities.

A third framework, by Longwe, was designed to measure the extent to which women and men have been empowered through gaining access to, participation in and control of the development process (Leach, 2003). For Longwe, empowerment in this context is achievement of equal participation in, and control over the development process and its benefits by men and women. It encourages gender awareness in development projects and helps to develop the ability to recognize women's issues whether the program is geared to only women or both men and women.

The development of gender planning constitutes a major contribution to the planning tradition. Gender-based analysis plays a major role in development organizations. Recently, there has been more of a focus on incorporating a diversity lense as a category of analysis opening up spaces for women from the South and other marginalized women to speak. While gender plays a significant role there are other factors of analysis that are fluid, specific, diverse and interconnected both locally and globally. The document *Inter-sectional Feminist*

*Frameworks: A Primer* (2006), for example, published by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, aims to account for the many circumstances that produce and sustain inequality and exclusion for diverse groups of women. The goal is ‘understanding varying groups of women and their diverse history that position them differently in the hierarchical social relations of power and give rise to different social identities’ (p. 6). This challenges program planners to think about who their audiences are and how they develop and design gender-sensitive programs in particular, including the planning of distance education.

### **Engendering Cross-Border Distance Education Planning**

The face of distance education has changed drastically in the last decade due to advanced information and communications technologies (ICTs). Another reason is the diversification of various forms of adult education. There is much literature in distance education that describes the process of creating, implementing and evaluating educational programs, often referred as the planning process. The value of these theories is in their application. Cross-border distance education integrates theory and practice; programmes offered by an institution of one country can be followed by students of other countries. This is also same as within borders i.e. programmes offered by one institution of a province can be followed by other provinces within the country. Yet it does not follow that the educational possibilities of distance technology necessarily recognize the diversity of educational needs and goals of the learners.

In regard to international distance education programs, not much literature exists to show that these are designed after doing cross-border needs analysis. Programs planned without devoting increased attention to the needs of remote learners lead to insufficient

enrolment and the possibility of future cancellation of the program. Any successful program must be learner-centred and must adopt an integrated approach to accommodate the complete scholarly and professional needs of the learners, including women. Sometimes program planners fail to realize the complexities of the learning environment. In general, distance education designers and subject specialists are hampered in their efforts by poorly defined development models and a dearth of heuristics for effective design (Schieman, Teare & McLaren, 1992), thus also ignoring gender sensitivity in distance education. What must be avoided is a 'standby approach where traditional on-campus courses are re-worked slightly' and then offered as distance courses (Ibid, p. 61). In taking an interdisciplinary approach, planners need to examine the stakeholders with an understanding of the talents, abilities, and strengths of each team member. By examining the roles and relationships of the various stakeholders involved, the planners can build a better model for distance course development. An initial step in creating a successful development program is to identify the competencies of the designers needed to perform the functions and output of major planning roles. The application of advanced technology in program planning for adult learners leaves the question of whether the program planners who plan traditional face-to-face educational programs following technical-rational approaches are also planning for distance education in the same way, without considerations of power and gender.

Issues of gender in distance education have met varying responses from educational planners and administrators, ranging from support to hostility. During the 1980s, with the emergence of global society, gender concern also surfaced world-wide in the field of distance education. The book *Towards New horizons: International Perspectives on Women in Distance Education*, for example, focused on developing gender-sensitive approaches to

distance education (Faith, 1988). In particular, the author makes clear that the planning of cross-border distance education often does not address issues of gender, power, class and ethnicity. This is in part because most of the research studies on distance education have been undertaken in the West. Research done in Third World countries—especially in India—is still in the embryonic stage. Therefore, the task of developing gender-sensitive planning for distance education is still enormous, but greatly important.

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the evolution of gender analysis and introduced a number of prominent and often referenced Northern and Southern scholars who have mapped the changing perspectives of WID, WAD and GAD approaches. The gender and development paradigm is primarily a Western concept. Southern scholars have claimed that the representation of women is particularly problematic in colonial and postcolonial texts. The evolution of program planning starting from the 1940s until now, has also been a largely Northern and male-centered undertaking. Little research has been done that responds to the needs of women in program planning. Finally, in distance education, there is a lack of research in the area of distance education planning competencies, which can then lead to ineffective programs, and the absence of any consideration of women, or a gender perspective. Taking these issues as a foundation, the next chapter describes the methodology employed in this study of gender policy and planning in the Global Learning for Development's distance education program.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The methodological approach employed in this study was a qualitative case study approach. Qualitative research seeks to explore the meanings that individuals create from their own experiences in their everyday life within the complex social system within which they live and work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Marshall & Ross, 1999). Merriam (1998) suggested that 'qualitative case studies can be characterized as being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic' (p. 29). This case study highlights these characteristics. It is particularistic because it highlights planning activities of a special program in the Global Learning for Development (GLD). It is descriptive as it gives a rich description of the planning process. Finally, it is heuristic as this study can encourage readers to begin to look at planning practice in a different way.

My study aimed to understand how gender-sensitivity became part of GLD policy and programs organizationally. I wanted to understand who were the stakeholders involved in the planning process of the MBA/MPA program and how needs and interests were negotiated. Finally, I focused on how a model or framework could be more gender-sensitive.

This chapter outlines the design of the study, beginning with a brief overview of the Global Learning for Development as study context. It then describes the process of gaining research approval, data collection instruments employed, the pilot study and issues of anonymity, and provides a description of transcription and data analysis, in addition to a discussion on credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability. The chapter concludes by discussing research limitations.

## **Context of the Institution**

The Global Learning for Development (GLD) is the world's only intergovernmental organization created by the Commonwealth Heads of the Government to promote open distance learning as a means to enhance access to education and training among member states. It is the first Commonwealth agency to be located outside Britain and is the only international intergovernmental Commonwealth organization headquartered in Vancouver, Canada. GLD was started in 1989. Currently it has 43 employees distributed in Vancouver and the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia in New Delhi, India. It is not an educational institution and does not register students, does not directly offer courses, programmes of study, scholarships or bursaries nor does it provide an accreditation service. It works with institutional and individual partners across the Commonwealth to enhance networks and facilitate learning to promote and nurture their development goals. The stakeholders include governments, institutions and citizens of the 53 Commonwealth member countries.

According to the latest draft three-year plan (2006-2009), the vision of this organization is 'access to learning is the key to development' (p. 6). GLD is also committed to gender equality in its policies, programmes and initiatives. According to the draft concept paper on gender (2006-2009), '[Gender] is a requirement from our donors and Board of Governors; it is also a Commonwealth priority and one of the fundamental principles of the Heads of the Government (CHOGM) Harare Declaration of 1991' (p. 1).

## **Research Setting**

A primary reason for selecting the Global Learning for Development as the site for my case study was my familiarity with the setting and an interest to look into the organization's changing perspective on gender. I had visited GLD a few times before my study began and this in fact propelled me to be curious enough about the setting to want to research it. I was quite interested to know about the Global Learning for Development's distinctive objective for provision of capacity-building expertise for education-related projects to member countries' universities and colleges. According to the three-year plan for 2003-2006, the significant growth of Open Distance Learning in the Commonwealth during the last decade is a result from GLD's direct involvement.

The three-year draft plan for 2006-2009 mentions that the goal of Global Learning for Development's work is to address some of the learning challenges associated with the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals, the six goals of Education for All (Dakar) and the Commonwealth objectives of peace, democracy, equality and good governance (GLD, 2006). These were grouped under the following action themes: education, learning for livelihoods and human development. Each theme aimed for one of four outcomes: policies, systems, models and materials on partnerships. The main agenda of this organization was to translate learning challenges into working policies and action. The organization was reviewing and formalizing a number of policies and making sure that gender as a cross-cutting theme was integrated into policies to reach its institutional objectives. The organization has had an informal level of commitment to gender for a long time, but no formal gender specific policy.

## **Gaining Research Approval**

I completed the University of British Columbia's required process for approval of my research by the Ethics Committee, and approval was granted in December 2005. Then I approached the program director of the Global Learning for Development with a formal request letter to do a case study on the Global Learning for Development's MBA/MPA program. Although the program is offered in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, I focused on the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India. I also requested access to documents pertaining to organizational policy, MBA/MPA program report, gender documents and minutes of the planning meetings. The program director was very supportive and formally gave permission in January 2006 to access resources and conduct interviews in the Global Learning for Development under some guidelines. One of the guidelines was that a disclaimer was to be added to my report claiming that it was my interpretation and representation of what I had prepared and that GLD took no responsibility for the accuracy of the information portrayed. Please note that this disclaimer in my introduction and in the special appendix. I was given permission to access all GLD documents except minutes of the meetings. The organization was interested in knowing my research findings.

## **Pilot Study**

Having little experience in interviewing people, the pilot interviews were beneficial for me to test my interview questions before interviewing participants of the Global Learning for Development. To test the interview questions, six face-to-face pilot interviews were conducted with the project Coordinator/Planner of the Centre for Human Settlement of the University of British Columbia, faculty members in the School of Community and Regional Planning and the School of Social Work of the University of British Columbia, with students

within the Department of Educational Studies and with a community worker. I sent an e-mail to all these participants requesting pilot interviews. The pilot interviews took place within the first two weeks of March 2006. I tested whether the questions were too long or appropriate for my study. I was able to create a comfortable atmosphere so that the participants could give a comprehensive answer to questions (see appendix D).

The pilot interviews highlighted how the ordering of the questions did not necessarily work and how the wording of the question did not match the interactive, conversational style approach. For example, the question ‘Could you please think of a metaphor that captures what planning is like?’ was a bit difficult for some student participants to answer. The academic participants were comfortable with the word ‘metaphor’ but not the non academic participants. Therefore, it revealed that I needed to expand the word ‘metaphor’ and refine it in some other way during interviews. Although I went along with the word ‘metaphor’ during the course of the main interviews, I always expanded upon the meaning of metaphor and gave some examples. The pilot test was a learning process as each participant shaped and influenced the questions differently. To account for this variation, the questions were revisited after each interview. I added new questions to each interview and also used ‘off the shelf’ questions as a supplement to any questions to help clarify the theme. The participants were encouraging and curious to know about the final outcome of the thesis and how findings would be applicable to me. Upon completion, interviews were taped-recorded, transcribed and analyzed for categories and themes.

## **Selection of Participants and Informed Consent**

In a qualitative research design, it is important to select a purposeful sample with which to gather data to fulfill the purpose of the research question. The selection of participants was based on several criteria. First, I visited Global Learning for Development a few times and sought out participants who were current and past programming or strategic planners and education specialists; I also recruited the resource coordinator and gender officer within the organization. Participants were also referred to me by colleagues and others who had knowledge of my research. My research was intended to understand the gender sensitive program initiatives as well as the gender-sensitive policy approaches that could be implemented in the MBA/MPA program. Therefore, I decided to interview seven participants from the Global Learning for Development in Vancouver and one from India and one from Australia (Table 1). These participants were selected because they best represented and informed the phenomenon of interest. After participants were identified, and during the initial contact, I identified myself, the research study, the significance of the research and confidentiality of the study. Those who agreed to participate reviewed and signed consent forms before the interview. The table below includes pseudonyms of the interview participants.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of GLD Interview Participants Interviews**

Name	Gender	Current/Former Staff, Location	Staff Position	Country of Origin	Experience
Anita	F	Current, Vancouver	Senior Management	Developing Country	Teaching, Research and Administration
Carol	F	Current, Vancouver	Middle Management	Developed Country	Programme Development, and Evaluation
Irene	F	Current, Vancouver	Middle Management	Developed Country	Project Development
Meenakshi	F	Current, India	Coordinator	Developing Country	Teaching, Research and Coordination
Nelson	M	Current, Vancouver	Senior Management	Developed Country	Education Advising, Strategic planning
Phillip	M	Current, Vancouver	Senior Management	Developing Country	Education Specialist, Knowledge Management
Rakesh	M	Current, Vancouver	Middle Management	Developing Country	Human Resource, Systems and Management
Richard	M	Current, Vancouver	Middle Management	Developing Country	Information Resource Management
James	M	Former, Vancouver	N/A	Developed Country	Education Specialist in Higher & Continuing Education
Kate	F	Former, Vancouver	N/A	Developed Country	Education Specialist in Higher Education

**Interviews**

Sharon Kaufman (1994) defines in-depth interviewing as a data gathering technique which gives detailed and richly-textured data for qualitative research. McMillan and Schmacher (1989) noted there are two techniques to collect data: interactive and non-

interactive techniques. Interactive techniques focus on one-on-one, in-depth interviews as the main source of data. A non-interactive technique (also used in this study) is a review of documents and interviews through e-mails as an additional source of data. Following Patton (2002), the interviews yielded direct quotations from the participants about their experiences, feelings and knowledge. These direct quotations became the foundation of content analysis of my data. There were eight current employees from the Global Learning for Development Vancouver, with whom I conducted face-to-face interviews. Since two participants were from India and Australia, I used e-mail as a tool to conduct interviews with them. Each interview was considered to be an evolving process as there were spontaneous questions that were generated in the course of the interview. This research design was flexible and adaptable. It was interactive and allowed me to gain insight into the participants' understanding of their roles, the milieu in which they conduct their work and understanding of their planning activities. The process of collecting data stopped when it was felt that sources had been exhausted and I could answer my research questions.

### **Interviewer Role**

My primary role in this study was of an interviewer and an observer. The interviews took a semi-structured and open-ended format. It was beneficial to have face-to-face discussion as I could gather more in-depth data about interviewees' experiences and feelings than in e-mail interviews. All interviews were taped with a length of approximately one and a half hours. The interview started with participants' professional background information and moved to more sensitive and complex questions (Gay & Airasian, 1996). The interview questions (see appendix D) were developed based on the research questions that came out of the literature review. Interview questions were divided into four sections: (a) introduction

and background, (b) planning experiences in development, (c) planning in Global Learning for Development and gender/cultural analysis, (d) reflection on the planning process and closing remarks.

Interviews were a reflection of what is important and meaningful to participants. Even though during the course of the interview there were some parts where the questions were not answered directly, participants would jump in and redirect the conversation in a direction they thought would be beneficial for the study. But one of the potential dangers of the face-to-face interviews was the question of familiarity with the setting and the participants. Because I had met two of the participants prior to the study, I was careful that familiarity would tend to have biased responses. There is a potential danger herein that 'instead of exploring assumptions and seeking clarity about events and experiences, interviewers' tend to assume that they know what is being said' (Seidman, 1998). I tried to avoid this by keeping an open, non-judgmental approach to encourage narrative, asked for clarifications when needed and supplemented with other questions.

Another important point to note is that if the interviewer comes from a similar background in terms of the age, social class and education, it is likely biases would go in the same direction and the overall results would be biased. The overall strength I brought to face-to-face interview situation were my abilities to connect and listen carefully to what the participants said and to frame the questions in such a way that they felt encouraged to respond in a detailed and comprehensive manner. The interview process became a reciprocal learning situation for me that a comfortable environment was created.

The difficulty I faced was with the e-mail interviewing with participants outside Canada. Even though the initial correspondence with the participants was faster with the

support of the Commonwealth staff, it took much longer from two participants to receive their final answers in responding to my questions. Another disadvantage was the inability to probe respondents for more detailed information through e-mail. Therefore, more than once additional questions were sent to the participants for in-depth information. All interviews were conducted between March and May 2006. Besides taping, I took detailed field notes which contained my personal thoughts, physical settings of the organization, status or roles of people and my conversation/ interaction with other staff officials met during the day. I soon found that most of the people with whom I interacted were quite interested in my research and process. They even mentioned that they were happy to be included in the interviews and were curious to know what practical difference could be made outside this research. One of the participants even commented that ‘How do you see it more broadly than just as thesis research’? The same participant was quite positive in viewing this study as interesting and fascinating.

### **Observer Role**

During my data collection days I spent a considerable amount of time locating myself as an observer in the process of doing research and writing journals. The point was to develop an understanding of participant’s view of reality within the organization and my own position as a researcher. In order to observe participants, during the process of data collection I kept a separate journal and noted my dilemmas, quandaries and other observations during the course of the interviews, informal talks and during the meetings. To begin with, my examination of the multiple power relations in the field and role as observer made me think that power relations are a very complex phenomenon. The power and unequal levels of control are often created, maintained and perpetuated during the course of the research

process. The process of my getting entry and sustaining access in the field made me realize the constructed power structures within the organization. Still, fieldwork was useful and important as it challenged me to witness and record and made me aware of my position within the process.

In my journal I reflected on the following questions: How was I feeling during the interview? What influence did my own set of values/biases have during the interviews? What influence did gender, age and cultural background of the participants had on the way I approached the interviews? I felt that there was often tension of maintaining the role of a researcher which involves a degree of detachment in order to be free from biases. Finding the balance is most crucial in the field work. I was a *participant-as-observer* who participated in the ongoing activities of the research setting where the identity of the researcher is known to the members of the setting. But I found that people in this organization did not expect me to be like them; in fact they were pleased to find me different just so long as I took a friendly and not an intimidating attitude.

Even though most of the people of GLD were extremely supportive during my data collection, at times there were questions concerning the 'rights' of a researcher to conduct or pursue in-depth enquiries for the purpose of the research. As written in my field notes, sometimes I felt that participants were worried about their involvement in this research study, primarily in adherence to the protection of confidentiality of the organization. One of the interview participants was extremely reluctant to schedule an interview even though the person promised for an interview. I was waiting for months to get the interviewees' appointment but in vain. It was quite a difficult situation for me as I had very limited data to analyse for the program. In truth it is impossible for a researcher to avoid having some

impact on the field during data collection. However, one might judge that their behaviour was shaped by influences far stronger than the presence of a single researcher.

I knew the data collection I was doing was important. At times this reminded me of discursive practices of speaking that raise the issue of location and positionality of the speaker within a social space. As a researcher I should pay attention not only to what is spoken and but also to what is not spoken, because what is not spoken may be an important issue. There were instances for example when a senior administrator encouraged me to use one of their confidential documents in order to meet my specific needs of the study. During my observation sessions during the field work there was an indication that men who have power want to help women succeed, thus opening more doors and opportunities for other women members. I was also fortunate to be given permission to attend the organization's programme update meeting on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The meeting was attended by 26 GLD staff including me. The environment of the meeting was quasi casual. The meeting was held in a separate building. It was focused on three sectors- education, learning for livelihood and human environment. The meeting started with the introduction of the president of the organization who focused on the 2006-2009 plan. As mentioned in the meeting, the plan was prepared through consultation, commissioned series of environmental scans, lessons from the past and on evaluation report.

Some of the action strategies of Global Learning for Development as mentioned in the programme update meeting was 'fewer for longer' programs would be designed to meet the specific needs of the individuals, 'unification of thinking in the planning process' and the global view was emphasis on the South-South collaboration. But this was to be done through unification of thinking in the planning process and the bottom line was to have a tight and

efficient planning system. Attending the programme update meeting and listening to informal talks provided me opportunities to cross-check key details received during the course of interviews. The team leaders and team members of the above mentioned sectors were announced. All the leaders were men. It was during the trip back to the GLD office, two of the GLD staff (one man and other woman) showed verbal surprise and resentment for selecting all men as the head of the team.

In the process of identifying emerging themes and patterns, I compared responses across individuals. Each day, I reviewed my observational notes together and with the interview transcriptions, flagging major themes derived from findings and filing them in the computer. After repeated reviewing I settled with some major themes. Then I reviewed literature based on these themes. The notes were protected with an access password.

### **Documents Reviewed**

Documents provided important information and contributed extensively to the overall understanding of the planning process of the MBA/MPA program. Document analysis included reviewing written materials such as organizational reports, governance manuals, news letters, pamphlets, MBA/MPA prospectus, few pages of a human resource document (as given by the Human Resource Manager). Participants provided information about some of the above documents during the course of interviews, which they believed would help me learn details about the program. Table 2 below shows the documents reviewed.

## **Table 2: Documents Reviewed**

### **Governance Manual:**

Global Learning for Development (2000). Board of governors' progress report to the sixth meeting of Commonwealth ministers responsible for women's affairs.

Global Learning for Development (2004). Governance Manual.

### **Organizational Reports:**

Commonwealth Secretariat. (2005). 15CCEM midterm review meeting Caribbean region and Canada.

Global Learning for Development (2006). Draft of the Three Year Plan, 2006 – 2009 for presentation to the Board of Governors 22-23.

Global Learning for Development (2003). Summary report 2000-2003.

### **News letters:**

Connections/Ed Tech news from 2004-2006.

### **Other documents:**

Global Learning for Development (2005). Human resource framework and compensation plan.

Kaushik, M. (2006). Gender issues in the MBA/MPA programme.

MBA/MPA prospectus.

Pamphlets of Global Learning for Development.

### **Anonymity**

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, their names, age, status and other demographic information were kept on a separate list from the interview transcripts. The participants were not identified in the transcripts. Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of participants. Transcripts were sent to all interviewers for review. One participant requested a change to a small portion of the interview conversation. Others considered it to be a valuable piece of information that they contributed to the study. Computer data were secured by a password. Only my supervisor and I had access to the data.

## **Transcription and Data Analysis**

The transcription was much faster as I continued to collect data and transcribe simultaneously. Some data analysis occurred simultaneously to the data collection, but this was limited to field notes. Some of the participants spoke in different accents which presented a challenge to the transcription, and meant listening to some tapes repeatedly. There was also a dilemma about the importance of voices. In the words of Hertz (1997), there was a choice of which data to include and which data to exclude, whose voices we choose to represent and whose voices we choose not to represent. Finally, the data were coded and analyzed to establish the emerging themes. I compared responses across individuals and locations.

## **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is divided into credibility, which roughly corresponds with the positivist concept of internal validity and dependability, which relates more to the reliability; transferability which is a form of external validity; and confirmability focuses on the issue of presentation (Lincoln & Guba 1985). All research must determine certain quality-criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated. According to Lincoln and Guba, the basic question addressed by the notion of trustworthiness is ‘How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?’ (1985, p. 290). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), there are four criteria for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

## **Credibility**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the goal of credibility is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. In this study, credibility was established by three different means. First, a pilot study was conducted to test and revise the interview questions. Second, the findings included direct observation from the participants. Third, after completing transcribing, transcripts were sent to the participants for verification.

## **Transferability**

Transferability is concerned with transferring or generalizing the results of the study to other contexts. How applicable the findings are to another environment or different group of people is the key consideration. Findings of my study might logically be transferable to other international developmental agencies and universities who are offering cross border distance education courses. The transferability of my findings would depend on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the situation to which it would be transferred. The study might be relevant to those organizations and universities in the developing world focusing on offering profitable professional courses, which might be developed with less focus on gender/culture-inclusivity in program content and delivery within a distance educational context.

## **Dependability**

The construct of dependability focuses on the assumption that the rules governing human life and social interaction are always changing: 'There is no solid, unmovable platform upon which to base our understanding of human affairs. They are in constant flux'

(Seidman, 1998, p.19). Therefore, the idea of dependability was to emphasize the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. Under different conditions, the design of my study and its findings might change. Therefore, this study also focused on describing the changes that occurred in the setting and how these changes affected the way I approached the study.

### **Confirmability**

This establishes the fact that data and interpretations are not something contrived of in the inquirer's imagination. Researchers need to link assertions, findings, and interpretations, and so on to the data themselves in readily discernible ways (Schwandt, 1997, p.164). In this study, confirmability was enhanced in two ways: using in-depth interviews and the provision of quotes from the participants in the description of the findings. I also kept aside field notes for me to interview in case another researcher is interested to confirm the findings. I have clearly stated my own assumptions and biases at the end of this chapter, keeping in mind ethical issues related to research. I have described my personal experiences while conducting this study to uncover my personal subjectivities.

### **Limitations**

No research project is without limitations. As Patton (1990) notes, 'There is no perfect research design. There are always trade-offs' (p. 162). The focus of the study was narrow and in-depth within the bounded system. Another related limitation was time constraints of the study. Observing participants for a month or two limited the complexities of the definition and relationship with whom research was done as well as the creation and presentation of knowledge on gender.

There were some further limitations, such as in the beginning, some of the research participants were reluctant to share their experiences, some of which may not be beneficial to their organization. For some participants, gender was a sensitive issue; they did not have wide knowledge and understanding of it, and were therefore quite cautious about expressing their viewpoints in their interviews. But in this context I make no claims of being a gender expert. My research reflects discourse with participants, and a frankness which cannot be assumed.

At times I felt frustrated because of the exceedingly inadequate data for the MBA/MPA program I gathered so far. There was a lack of archived qualitative and quantitative data on the MBA/MPA program in the Global Learning for Development office. In-depth interviews with the participants provided information, but there were limits to how much information could be gathered through one scheduled session. Further, corresponding with the participants in the IGNOU, India was more difficult than expected. As the majority of the participants work in the same organization and were familiar with one another, certain homogeneity of views may have incurred. The important constituency groups such as MBA/MPA learners in India and instructors were not polled for their views about the program. This is because I was mainly concerned about the planning process of the MBA/MPA program; therefore I did not probe deeper into other effects of the study. But a more in-depth picture of the planning process of the MBA/MPA program could have been provided in this study if formal minutes of the meeting were allowed to be documented. In my work on gender and program planning, conflicting interpretations can arise with the researcher and participants who may not share the perspectives that shape those interpretations. Therefore, some aspects of this study remain a work-in-progress.

## **Summary**

A qualitative case study research approach was used in this study. A total of ten participants who were involved in planning past or current GLD programs were interviewed; planning meetings were observed, and GLD documents analyzed. My role in this study was of an interviewer and an observer and the whole process of the data collection was a learning opportunity. This chapter provided background on the context of the study, highlighted the research methodology employed, and provided information on the limitations of the study. The next chapter will present the results.

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

### Introduction

This chapter presents the results of interviews, observations and documents exploring GLD's gender equality strategy and its implementation through policy and practice. The findings are organized around the first two research questions for the study; namely:

1. How did gender-sensitivity become part of GLD policy and program organizationally?
2. Which stakeholders were involved in the planning process of the MBA/MPA program and how were their needs and interests negotiated?

The third research question on how the planning process can be made more gender-sensitive is addressed in the next chapter.

### Origins of GLD Organizational Gender Policy

The Global Learning for Development's gender policy was influenced, in the first instance, by wider gender equity policies in the Commonwealth itself, including those of Commonwealth partners. Within GLD, a gender policy was slowly being mainstreamed, in program planning, the recruitment of women staff, the establishment of a gender specialist position, and efforts to more effectively involve men.

### Influence of the Wider Context: Commonwealth Gender Policies

The approach towards gender equality in the Global Learning for Development's (GLD) policy is related to wider Commonwealth organizational gender policies regulating GLD. The first of these policies was the *1987 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Women and*

*Development.* This plan consisted of commitments made by governments and the Secretariat to promote women's equality in all Commonwealth countries, explicitly in the WAD traditions. The *1991 Harare Declaration* then renewed emphasis on achieving equality for women as a Commonwealth priority.

In 1993, the fourth meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs requested that an Expert Group be set up to review and update the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Women and Development. The *1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development*, the Commonwealth vision for women towards the year 2000, produced as a result of the mandate, now moved toward the GAD tradition. The shift is towards a more strategic GAD approach which analyses power relationships between men and women and seeks to equalize them through mainstreaming gender in all policies and practices. This will examine how they impact upon and meet the identified needs of both men and women. It provided a framework within which member governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat could work to transform the Commonwealth vision for women into reality. In working towards achieving their future objectives, Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs felt that, because of the special position of the Commonwealth, the *1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development* could provide a unique model for international cooperation to achieve gender equality (Board of Governors Report, 2000).

In April, 2000, Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs (WAMM) met in India. The report of the Sixth Meeting of the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs (2000) mentions that 'WAMM represents the largest grouping of Ministers responsible for women's affairs within the international arena who

form a constituency that meets regularly, builds consensus on critical issues and approaches, shares experiences and best practices, and provides leadership and expertise to advance gender equality throughout the Commonwealth'. (p.1). It was mentioned in the report that the changing of contemporary society could have an impact on male/female roles and relations, thus gender gaps for both males and females should be addressed to achieve gender equality and to fulfill the rights of women and girls. This focus on both genders again represents a GAD approach to policy.

Finally, the *Commonwealth Plan of Action (PoA)* for gender equality (2005-2015) 'recognized that men and boys are essential partners in achieving gender equality' (p. 13). Here it was formally recognized that there were emerging gender gaps affecting men. [Therefore],... in identifying a role for men and boys in the achievement of equality of women, a principle that must be observed is the recognition of men's existing role in perpetuating inequalities and the need for men and boys to reshape their behaviour and transform their roles' (p. 17). As a result, the Commonwealth agreed to actively engage with institutions and partners that work with men on gender equality issues. The *Plan of Action* reflected the Commonwealth's vision and incorporated its responses to the impacts of global changes and challenges on women and men, girls and boys. An emphasis on women's rights in particular also remains present.

The Commonwealth Secretariat works in partnership with multilateral agencies, regional organizations, academic institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector, at the global level. These organizational ties also have a strong impact on the Commonwealth's gender policies. Over the years the Commonwealth has adopted a coordinated approach in relation with the United Nations, the European Union, the African

Union, regional bodies in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific, the World Bank and regional development banks.

All Commonwealth members belong to the UN and the Secretariat has observer status at the UN General Assembly. The Commonwealth funds and administers a joint office at the United Nations for nine small Commonwealth member states. Further, it has a special relationship with the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) which dates back to a *1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Co-operation*. The MOU focuses on enhancing co-operation between the two organizations in areas of common interest. According to the MOU, as part of its gender and human rights work, the Secretariat is represented on the UN Task Force on Indigenous Women, and participated in the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Commission and the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

We live in a world where two thirds of all those who have no access to education are girls and women. In the year 2000, the world leaders gather together and moved the *Beijing Platform for Action* and other UN Conferences from a set of commitments to a clear set of goals and targets focusing on poverty, education, gender equality and environmental stability in the form of the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs). 2010 was decided as a target for reaching each goal. One of the important goals is gender equality and is critical to the achievement of all the other goals. The MDG recognized that gender equality and the empowerment of women are fundamental to the achievement of the MDGs. It promoted that gender equality and the empowerment of women both as basic human rights and as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate truly sustainable development. In pursuit of the renewing the values and commitments to democracy, respect for diversity,

determination to eliminate poverty and striving for international peace and security, the Commonwealth Heads of Government endorsed the Millennium Development Goals in the Coolum Declaration on March 2002. They also declared that ‘in too many societies women continue to face discrimination’ (Coolum Declaration, 5 March 2002). The Commonwealth nations felt that MDGs can only be achieved by addressing the disproportionate burden of poverty, lack of access to education and health services and lack of productive opportunities borne by women. Therefore, gender equality is essential to eradicating poverty (CHOGM, 2002).

#### Mainstreaming Gender Equity Policies in the GLD

Following the 1995 *Commonwealth Plan of Action*, the Board of Governors progress report for Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women’s Affairs (2000) mentioned that GLD adopted a *Policy of Equal Opportunities* in September, 1995, which included ‘the principle of gender equity in recruitment and staffing, consistent with the overall goal of equal opportunity for all persons’ (p. 3). It also stressed the fact that GLD had integrated gender issues in their programmes since 1997 and strove ‘to ensure that its programmes are gender-balanced and continue to work towards improving access to education and training for girls and women, particularly where imbalances have been identified’ (p. 3). Commitment to gender issues was strengthened organizationally by appointing the first woman Vice-President in GLD and creating the joint position of Gender Officer/ Board Secretary from September 2005.

In interviews conducted with GLD staff, there was a general sense of optimism about GLD’s renewed sense of commitment and vitality towards gender. One project development

staff member, a middle manager who joined GLD in the 1990s, explained that her first exposure to gender equity principles was in the organization:

*Irene: I became aware of [gender] after joining GLD. I remember at that time what we were told that whenever we planned our projects gender-equity and gender-balance must be one of the prior considerations. It was not to spell out of any details but was a light created for us to be aware of whenever we start our program (28/03/06)*

Building institutional capacity to assess programmes and policies from a gender perspective was enhanced by the Commonwealth Secretary General's 15CCEM mid-term review meeting in Edinburgh, 2005. They concluded that while a study had been commissioned for male underachievement in 2004, more work needed to be done in order to shed light on the matter. Therefore, GLD's challenge, as Carol, the gender officer, saw it, was *'to deal with access issues of the girls but we also need to look at what's going on with the boys and that's what makes Commonwealth different'*. (16/03/06).

Rakesh, a mid-level manager responsible for GLD human resource development agreed that there was an awareness of gender equity in designing educational programming, but not an appreciation of structural issues related to power:

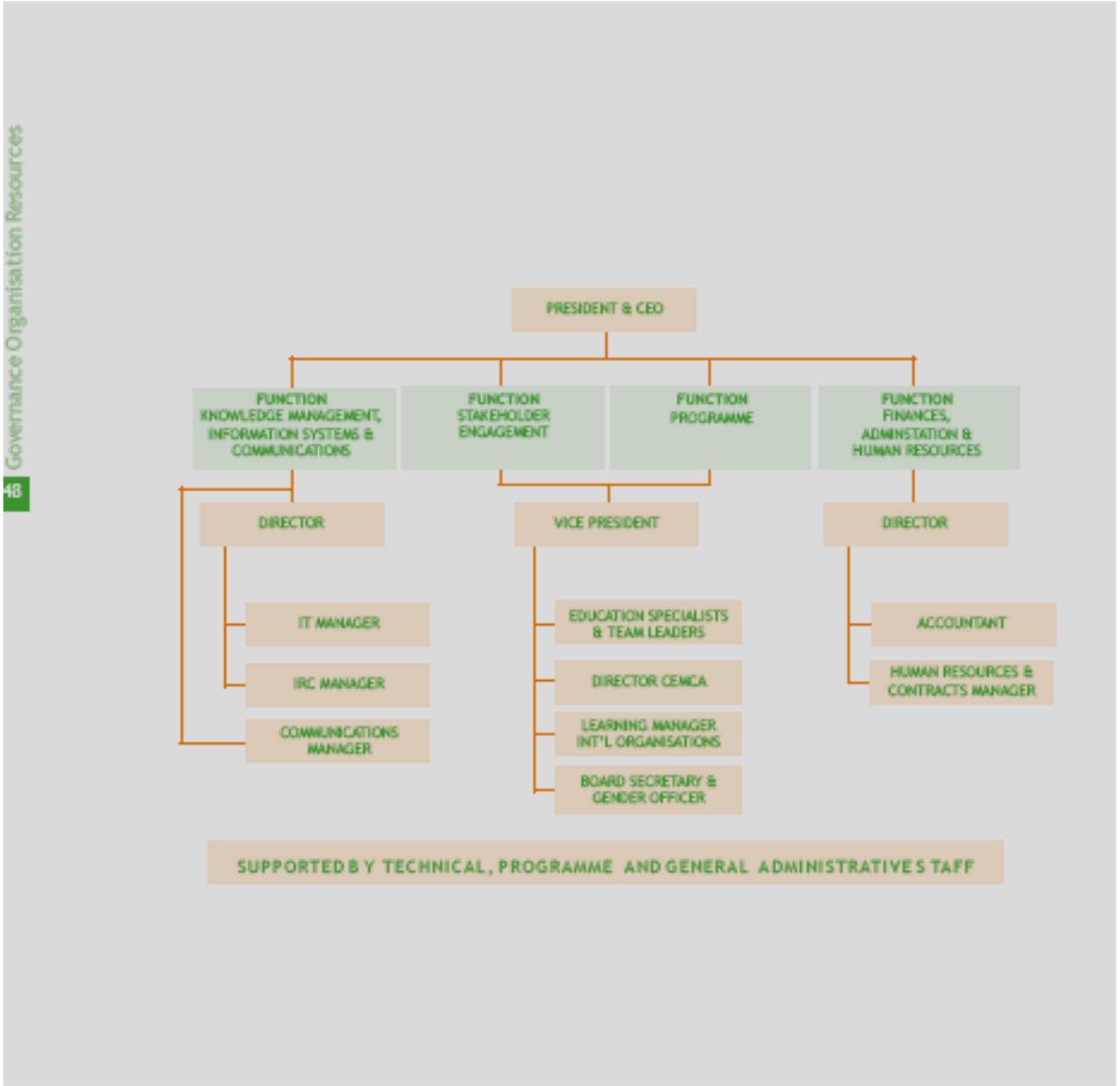
*I think the GLD colleagues [for the] most part are sensitive to the gender issues and try to make sure that there are equal number of men and women in a program. But we don't do that-- take the same step in making sure the power level or the power base is*

*of equal number. Those are the kinds of the finer points we are hoping to integrate into the program to get people to think about. (16/05/06)*

GLD recently underwent a major organizational restructuring in which the structural issues of gender and power began to be considered, primarily through the planned recruitment of women to mid-level management and to the Board of Directors. In this, GLD started to pay more attention to the issue of the equal participation of men and women in the decision-making process, and the importance of assessing the impact of women in mid-management positions in shaping policies and programs of the organization.

According to the above operational structure, currently women comprised of 55.8% of all employees within the organization, out of which 39.5% are in the administrative support group. At the middle management level women still comprise only 29.4% of all employees compared with men as 70.5%. Six out of nine education specialists are men. Thus, there are some gender disparities in staffing. In part to address this problem, the combined position of Gender Officer and the Board Secretary was created towards achievement of gender equality within the organization. The chart below shows GLD's operational framework under four different sectors.

**Figure 1: Operational Framework of Global Learning for Development**



Source: The 2006-2009 Plan

GLD also renewed the principle of regional and gender balance on its Board of Governors, with seven of 14 Board members being women (Board of Governors’ report, 2000).

GLD’s draft plan of action (2006-2009) highlighted GLD policies and programs which focused on efficiency, effectiveness, ‘positioning’ and impacts. According to the draft

plan, 'GLD's agenda includes aspects of health, environment, gender and governance where learning technologies can make a difference' (Three-Year Plan, 2006, p. 22). In terms of gender equity, this policy translated mainly into a consideration of gender equity in educational planning and in the recruitment sector, as indicated by Carol, a mid-level manager, and the GLD Gender Officer:

*... we started to talk about gender, I think a couple of years ago. We emphasized gender mainly in the recruitment activity..... So far it has worked well for the three or four positions that we advertised in the last year or so. In fact there has been more of a 60-40 ratio in the final stages where more females as compared to males have met the criteria. In the new revised policy being implemented and backed up by the gender training, it is likely to get more imbedded into the GLD culture. [However,]...we do not have specific gender policy at the moment that is ...looking into gender as an internal human resource policy. Until mid-2004 we did not (even) have a formal human resource plan. We have now. (16/03/06)*

Rakesh, in Human Resources, agreed with this assessment:

*...Yes, recruitment is a main thing that we look at... When we hire consultant we try to make a balance regarding expertise and gender aspect. We try to make a balance there which has not been addressed in the past and we have some statistics -last year sometime--i.e. male versus female ratio on the consultants we have. So that's another area we look at gender concern. (16/05/06)*

## The Gender Specialist

In GLD, as in many international development agencies, the person in charge of gender work is considered a gender specialist or has gender as a ‘focal point’ in their expertise. Generally speaking, gender specialists have specific technical expertise and experience based on gender perspectives in the area of work, while a gender focal point tends to be somebody within the organization appointed to promote gender equality in all aspects of the work of the organization. They may have some experience in promoting gender equality or be completely new to gender related matters. Moreover, they may not be working full-time on gender; a certain percentage of the time may be allotted to carry out gender specific work in the organization. Gender focal points are not always gender specialists.

In GLD, the gender specific work is carried on by the gender officer which is a joint position-gender officer and board secretary. Organizational-related gender work comprises only 30% of her workload, with the remaining 70% is devoted to board duties and work-related to governance issues in the organization. The gender officer in the future will be working closely with the Board and senior management. With this distributed workload, the job seems to be more of an advocate and catalyst. Gender work is still advisory and peripheral. This translates into qualifications and responsibilities for the position of gender officer:

*Carol: I don't have a formal educational background on gender. So it is typical of people who are working on development who come into gender as an interest but also with the right place at the right time.. [The Position] is still not defined because the*

*position is relatively new— but having said that, I have been encouraged to review the gender plan and program initiatives through a gender lense*

*Do I have decision making power? Yes, I have more influencing power and I think I'm seeking it at the moment i.e. influence and advocacy...(16/03/06).*

### Bringing in the Men

Most development organizations like GLD not only set development policy agenda by connecting gender equality to other development goals, but also nurture more equality through their organizational structure and show their partners how this could be possible. The general impression derived from conversations with all of the participants was that there is a need for a greater commitment and dedication to encourage participation of men in promoting gender equality in organizational practices. This is a paradigm shift that allows organizational actors to be representative and participative in this arena, but a difficult one. This is because organizational culture is a product of accumulated legacies of authority, hierarchy, fixed patterns and results-orientation.

Nelson, one of the senior GLD management officials, illustrated this point, as he noted that gender-equal staffing numbers does not usually mean shared power:

*Most of the organizations I know have more women in them but are actually run by the men (21/03/06).*

Bringing men into the equation in the service of promoting more gender equality in the structure of GLD is a challenge. Carol reflected on a lack of organizational awareness of a problem at all:

*How far would it be successful? That needs to be seen because the thing you need is to have it in the management organization... and I think it's mixed. I'm not sure if there is lack of understanding or people simply don't feel that there is a problem.*

*...It has been heated [in the policy dialogue] as there have been differences of opinion about how fast, how far and how we should we go (16/03/06).*

The matter of fact by default that men's interests are served by any activity that was not specifically earmarked for women. Their position needs no negotiation, because it is backed up by culture and tradition (Macdonald, 1994).

In GLD, in fact I observed that, there were fewer opportunities for men to talk with other men about gender issues or for men and women to have an open dialogue about the positive and negative consequences of deeper partnerships for gender equality. However, gender action was invigorated because of the support of some male senior management officials: Nelson, a senior management male and experienced organizational planner, reflected how his background played a major role in his commitment on gender:

*I came from an organization [where] gender is an important part of the diversity. So we formed the gender committee and checked to see what to do in gender (21/03/06).*

He summed up the importance of GLD's gender operational guidelines:

*It's not that we will say we are not going to work unless you have gender policy but we would say that we are gender-sensitive organization and we respect that to be concerned.*

In GLD, men were seen as allies to support gender initiatives in their efforts towards equality. The gender committee mentioned by Nelson in the quote above consisted of people from the various levels of the organization, with a special effort made to involve men, and have a gender-balance group. It was hoped that the presence of men would help the committee both to understand men's positions and privilege, and to be able to outline men's responsibilities in work towards equality. Also, the inclusion of men on the committee would help to reduce the perception that gender is a 'women's space' and a 'women's issue, and allow men to talk freely about it. Henceforth, greater men's involvement is rooted to the fact that it would entail a greater focus and push for knowledge of gender in education for staff, particularly men. The commitment to this vision is illustrated by the following comment:

*Carol: Making that commitment and making sure that everybody is brought into that and is able to move forward. That's what we are doing a training in April (16/03/06).*

Another GLD staff member also indicated the importance of training to address gender issues in GLD educational programs:

*Irene: I think men are to be trained. The fact that they are sitting in the planning table doesn't mean that they know how to plan....All planners need to be competent and proficient in planning like what are the issues they have to be aware of when they plan...(28/03/06).*

The need for gender training was similarly described by a senior management male official, Phillip, who had worked in the private sector and academia before joining GLD. He commented that:

*There is a great deal of sensitivity that we need to tackle the gender thing but I don't think that any organization has clarity of what is required and what must be done....it would be good to have an entire team together and have good psychologist go through sensitivity training. Not to cover gender but all sorts of discrimination....We cannot recognize discrimination.... (23/03/06)*

Gender training is a powerful 'transforming' tool through which staffs of the organization learn new attitudes, knowledge and skills on gender. The involvement of men and women in the training session is fundamental because men need to take responsibility for work on gender and need to know how to do it. Phillip again put this issue into perspective when talking about GLD's approach to gender dimensions in its activity:

*I think more guidelines need to be created how to tackle this area because it doesn't just mean checking that you got women in a workshop. Yes, we try to represent gender as possible but I think it goes further (23/03/06).*

According to the draft GLD concept paper on gender (2006-09) the organization considered investing in a gender development training session for 2-3 days in April 2006. The draft document mentioned that were some proposed issues to explore during those

sessions, for example what do we mean by gender mainstreaming in GLD's work? What do we do? How we do it? How do we measure our impact? The focus of the session would be professional development where we enable GLD colleagues, through their experience, to explore their understanding of the issues and the difficulties they have in integrating gender issues into their work and at the same time to look at what other agencies are doing. In the first week of May 2006, a gender training session was then held in the GLD office where men and women participated enthusiastically. The workshop focused on Education, Learning and Livelihood sector to all staffs of the organization.

### **MBA/MPA Planning Process**

The planning process for the MBA/MPA program involved several institutional stakeholders in a consortium partnership. However, there was a striking absence of learners as stakeholders, and no women learners in particular. This may have contributed to a decline in program enrollment over the first seven years. In assessing needs, the MBA/MPA planning group took a 'supply side' approach: they believed the fact that it would provide a low cost distance education program more accessible to students than overseas programs, with very low resource start-up costs, would in itself meet learners' needs and draw them into the program. Program objectives were set in the same spirit, and although women staffs were involved in the process, no gender awareness was evident in the objectives. Likewise, performance indicators for program outcomes were not specified or agreed upon in advance, and again, showed no sensitivity to gender.

## Program Stakeholders

The present knowledge-based economy demands lifelong learning and calls for significant educational reform and greater accountability. Therefore an increasing number of educational institutions are now aligning themselves to expand and enhance their support for continuing education programs. According to Boyle (1981) the term ‘program is often equated with “curriculum” as used in references focusing on formal school situations’ (p. 4). A curriculum is a set of courses offered by an institution. A program is the product resulting from all the programming activities, which includes need analysis, planning instruction, promotion, and evaluation and reporting. Continuing professional education is one such field that is achieving a new level of development through consortium arrangements.

The GLD’s MBA/MPA program is a ‘targeted’ program which was created based on the model of a *consortium* of universities that have come together to offer an affordable professional management programme in South Asia at a distance, through a partnership arrangement. A consortia can be formed for various reasons: for example to share costs, or to reach out to a large number of students; to share courses, resources and academic expertise; to attract funding opportunities etc (Rumble & Latchem, 2004). There are potential benefits regarding the formation of consortium, but it depends upon: (a) defining the strategic benefits; (b) picking up the right and best partners; (c) putting in time and up-front investment; (d) planning for both short term and long term; (e) determining the relative roles of the institutions, etc. (Bates, 2000, p. 176-9). The following comments of a current GLD official describe how the universities worked together for the MBA/MPA program:

*Irene:...the model which was created was getting the open universities together to work on it as a consortium and then trying to go to the Commonwealth to ask for good management learning programs and courses to kick start the entire course development process (28/03/06).*

Member institutions joined together and formed an Academic Board in 1998 to plan and manage affairs of the MBA program. This resulted in what appeared to be a strong commitment for institutional partnering. The Board was headed by the CEO/President of the Global Learning for Development, and consisted of representatives from the following institutions: Allama Iqbal Open University, Bangladesh Open University, Indira Gandhi National Open University, and Open University of Sri Lanka. Board representatives are management officials from these universities. In the consortium, the Global Learning for Development acted as a *catalyst of collaboration* for the MBA/MPA program.

Meenakshi, coordinator of the MBA/MPA program in the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), noted that:

*The Academic Board is the main academic policy making body for these programmes. I, along with another colleague from IGNOU, was also invited by GLD to Vancouver to develop the programme protocols and the guideline programme prospectus before the programmes were launched, to enable the participating countries to get the programme proposals approved in their respective countries (30/03/06).*

Although the participating MBA/MPA countries were identified as stakeholders, it is also true that the concept of stakeholder participants in planning an educational program has acquired a multitude of meanings in the contested arenas of development. But in general, the term appears to highlight a sense of common purpose and mutual understanding. Stakeholders' participation in the planning process of an educational program helps to ensure how, and in what ways, a program can be shaped that can have a broader impact and greater implications. Thus, active participation and involvement of different stakeholders in the planning process have real implications for continuing education programs.

Current stakeholders involved in the planning process of the MBA program are The National Open Universities from the Sub-Continent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka), later joined by the Open University of Hong Kong. Within this planning group, a consultant was also invited in for some phases of the planning of the MBA/MPA program. Generally, consultants are weak participants within a planning group because they participate only to a limited degree. The power rests with other members of the planning team who reserve the right to incorporate the advice of the consultant or not. James, a former GLD continuing education specialist, noted that:

*The consultant (a professor from the University of Toronto) contributed mostly in ensuring academic coherence from the disparate parts of the planning process. (Interview, 28/03/06).*

A most striking absence of stakeholders evidenced was learners themselves. In fact, learners did not participate at all in deciding the content of MBA/MPA program. Yet it is of

course important to have learners' participation and perspectives from the initial stage of planning as they can influence specific-learning objectives and negotiate their interests with regard to the details of the content. In this way the learners can voice their suggestions for the improvement of the programme. This lack of learner involvement may help explain a dramatic decrease in enrolment in the MBA/MPA program offered in the IGNOU from the first to the seventh intake of students, and more significantly the number of female enrolment was not at all satisfactory. In the first intake of 4 semesters 2002-2003 there were 421 male students (79.7%) and 106 female students (20%) out of total enrolment of 528. However, by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> intake, the total enrolment of students was a mere 32 students, out of which all were male and none female (MBA/MPA Enrolment Statistics, 2006).

### Assessing Needs

Boyle (1981) suggested that there are number of categories of continuing education programs and that this helps to clarify the concept of program. 'These are: (1) developmental-like programs to help teachers, nurses, lawyers, or pharmacists maintain certification standards; (2) institutional programs are to help a community change certain economic or social situations, such as developing housing for elders, building a recreational facility for youth, or changing attitude about equality and (3) informational programs to distribute information that is new or is needed by professionals, individuals, families or communities for immediate use' (p. 6).

It is important to note that as Boyle (1981) stated that 'understanding the different types of programs is significant because the type of program and its goals have implications for the nature and design of the [program]' (p. 6). He also noted that 'developmental programs often begin in a very ambiguous situation' (p. 9). Although special attention is

needed for a problem, often the required attention it is not well defined nor are priorities established. Not only developmental programs, often institutional programs are not developed primarily from the assessed needs of the learners, but are developed based upon knowledge from the field or the discipline. According to Sork (2002) ‘An education need is a gap or discrepancy between a present capability (PC) and a desired capability (DC)’ (p. 101).

The prospectus of the MBA/MPA programme showed that it aimed to complement existing MBA/MPA programmes currently being offered in the Commonwealth to meet the social and professional demands for management and public administration education at the post-graduate level. Therefore, the MBA/MPA program is a combination of an institutional and informational program which was started due to ‘felt needs’ and ‘ascribed needs’, terms used by Sork (2002). Meenakshi’s comment below shows the approach taken to planning the program:

*The goals were set on the basis of a felt need and researched gap between the supply and demand of world class executive level management programmes in the developing countries as well as the competencies required to be developed in the participants of the programme (30/03/06).*

Sork (2002, p. 101) mentioned two uses of needs assessment in educational planning, i.e., ‘to justify’ resources and ‘to focus’ planning efforts:

One use of need is to justify the resources that we put into planning and offering programs. In order to claim that we are using these resources responsibly, we are

expected to show that we are planning in response to some circumstances that requires action. A second use of the concept of need is to focus our planning efforts so that we can determine what the form and substance of the program should be. We are expected to make these decisions in a reasoned way by deriving the content of the program from the needs of the learners whom we hope will participate.

Justification of the MBA program was to a significant degree accomplished well before the program was planned by signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with GLD and Allama Iqbal Open University, Bangladesh Open University, Indira Gandhi National Open University, and Open University of Sri Lanka. James, the former project officer of the MBA/MPA programme responsible for managing the project and coordinating stakeholder participation during the period of programme development commented on why the executive programme was started:

*The major driving force [of the program] was the wish/need to provide an affordable qualification for those non- sponsored students in the developing Commonwealth who would never have the chance of enrolling in the swanky MBAs provided from UK, Canadian, Australian mainstream Universities and who missed out on the quotas from their own OUs. (01/04/06).*

James also identified the need for affordable MBAs especially for women:

*[The] over the years bears out the founding Board's strong hope and expectation that an affordable MBA/MPA (based on an awareness that many deserving students will never have access to Corporate or non-Corporate sponsorship) would serve women in the developing Commonwealth just as much if not more than men. (28/03/06).*

Affordability meant that there were also very few resources to develop the program, which was put together largely from scratch. Again, James describes the MPA/MBA program development process:

*... with a limited budget and no chance of recouping materials design and development costs from fees, the makeup of the initial degree was 'course units by acquisition' from the participants OU's: we selected from what was available and melded the disparate units from IGNOU (mainly)...as far as possible into a coherent whole (01/04/06).*

*At [the] starting stage we had neither the time nor the resources to do more than take [preexisting curriculum] units as they stood (06/04/06).*

Generally, efforts that focus planning require more attention in circumstances where there are competing interests. There was no evidence in the MBA/MPA planning process indicating competing interests: it was largely an institutional collaboration along familiar lines of cooperation. The Open University of Hong Kong, a couple of universities in Australia and New Zealand, and some Canadian universities contributed to the course

development process by sharing materials, but did not expect a return from these efforts. The process was driven by economics and the need to offer it at low cost which is a common issue for gender mainstreaming.

### Setting Program Objectives

The most commonly used means of defining outcomes or intentions of a program is through objectives. The program objectives, as mentioned in the prospectus of the MBA/MPA program were:

- i. To enable students in the Commonwealth countries where the programmes are offered to obtain Masters degrees in the areas of Business Administration and Public Administration, contributing to their professional growth and career advancement and to their countries' development;
- ii. To develop human resources in various aspects of the areas noted above; and
- iii. To develop quality post-graduate programmes that can be implemented widely in Commonwealth countries and can be recognized across the Commonwealth.

Clearly, these program objectives show no explicit awareness of gender in the planning process. GLD Staff comments bear this out:

*Irene: The whole thing was not driven by gender; I think we have to be clear. The whole thing was driven by the need for the professional management training program in South Asia: How can we give South Asia a viable program through partnership arrangement? (28/03/05).*

The absence of gender sensitivity was puzzling given that the planning team of the MBA/MPA programme worked under GLD's gender policy and had strong input from women:

*James: [the CEMBA planning team] consciously and readily operated throughout under the constructive GLD's gender mandate objectives. [Further,] the Board of Management had several female Professors ....(01/03/06).*

*Meenakshi: Several women participated as Board members in setting programme objectives and also subsequently as course writers and evaluators (01/03/06).*

Having a gender policy in place within the larger organization and including women in the planning team clearly did not guarantee that women's interests were being served, or even acknowledged in the MBA/MPA program. If the planning team 'consciously operated' under the GLD's gender mandate, then gendered objectives should be stated clearly at the beginning; in part to stipulate the kinds of baseline data needed to monitor the progress of the program in meeting its goals. These data could be quantitative (for example, the number of women and men enrolled or dropped out in the course) or qualitative (for example, the issue of equality of opportunity and access of resources and benefits from those resources surrounding the MBA/MPA program). But no evidence of gendered objectives of any kind was found.

## Outcomes

The GLD management programme was planned under a consortium arrangement, as noted above. However, Perry and Rumble (cited in Perraton & Lentell, 2004) argue that consortia 'are a splendid idea which all too seldom works in practice' (p.126). Generally, different organizations in a consortium interpret the success or failure of a program in different ways. When can you say that the programme is successful or has failed? No sets of performance indicators were developed and agreed upon from the beginning to assess the MBA/MPA program outcomes. As noted, there has been a large decrease in the total student enrolment numbers at IGNOU and a low proportion of women's enrollment in this program in general. Insufficient enrollment in the MBA/MPA program offered in IGNOU raises the question of whether the program was planned properly to meet the needs of the targeted audience. Moreover, it is well understood that the target population, i.e. women executives, are smaller to begin with in India. Therefore, the end result of the well-intended efforts was a lack of enrollment in the program. Some deeper understanding of the planning process is needed to support the MBA/MPA program.

The planning committees developed and superimposed a program on their defined target population. The program was identified by understanding general social need and demand rather than by proper systematic needs assessment. According to Hanson (cited in Sork, 1991) 'the providers should not dilute their programs in an attempt to make them of general interest to all people within their target group; instead they should aim programs at a more selectively defined audience' (p. 38). The present MBA/MPA program is in fact built on IGNOU's regular existing MBA course structure without a gender-based perspective applied to program design. This was done because of lack of proper resources.

In the words of Lentell (2004) ‘...distance learning seldom happens by chance, but is dependent upon careful planning and management....’ (p. 252). A competent distance education planner increases the probability of achieving the desired objective of a program. If the desired objectives are not met then either the objectives were inappropriate or means of achieving those objectives were ineffective. If a certain population is not using the services then it is clear that the program is not speaking to the needs of that sector. Therefore, it is important for the planning committee to fully understand those needs and then effectively program to meet them the objectives of the program and the institution. Nothing can be more critical than the structure of the programs that does not address the needs of women learners and for which proper resources are needed to do it effectively.

### **Summary**

The issue of organizational responsibility is an important factor in bringing a gender perspective within the policy and program initiatives of the organization. The findings indicate that the organization has started focusing on its gender initiatives within its policy and programme activities. The organization focused on equal participation of men and women at the senior decision-making level. Moreover, in order to pursue the goal of gender equality at both organizational and individual level, GLD adopted the participatory approach i.e. to involve more men in practice. As the initiatives are new and gender work is still considered catalytic and advisory, more determination and individual initiatives from the staff are required to address the issue of gender equality.

The MBA/MPA program offered in the IGNOU was planned under a consortium arrangement. Whether the program was planned by identifying and conducting systematic

need assessment is not clear. Due to some weaknesses in the planning stage there was insufficient enrolment of learners as a whole and especially women. Mainstreaming gender which the organization practices in its policy and program initiatives should meet the needs of men and women.

## **CHAPTER V: TOWARDS A GENDER-SENSITIVE FRAMEWORK**

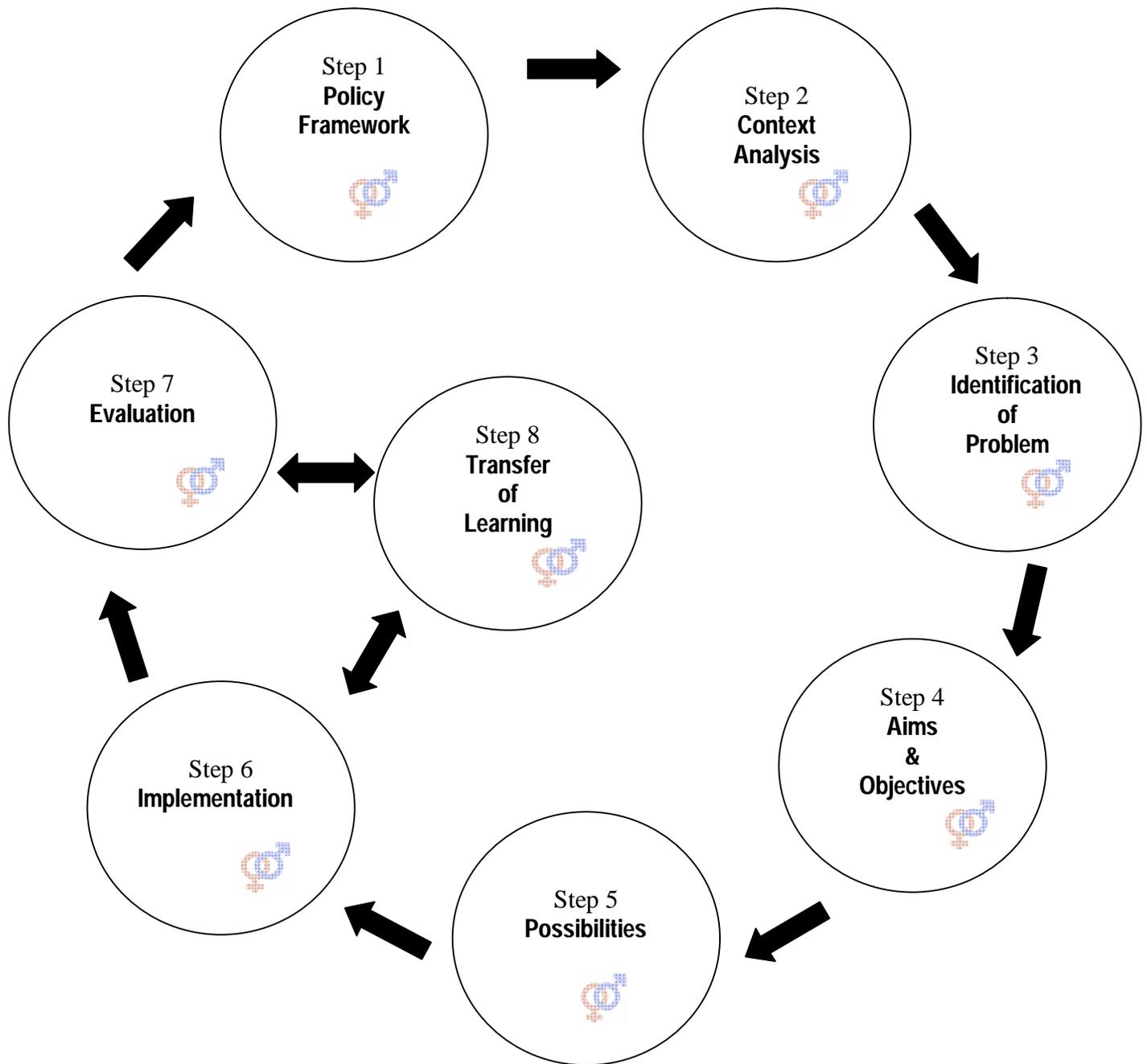
How can a program planning framework be more gender-sensitive? The framework below relates the major planning steps. I developed this framework in connection with the findings about the MBA/MPA program, and evident gaps in gender-sensitivity. Now here lies the question: how can we address gender issues in cross-border distance education programs?

I propose a framework for distance education that is in response to and extended from the Harvard and Moser Frameworks. To an extent I have also looked into Longwe's framework. But Longwe's framework ignores other forms of inequality and encourages a view of women as a homogenous group (March, Smith & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). This can tempt users to focus only on women and view women's issues as separate from men rather than on gender relations or other forms of social difference. 'Although designed for women's empowerment (its failure to use gender as the defining concept has been criticized), there seems to be no reason why it could not be used of other disadvantaged groups...' (Leach, 2003, p. 56).

In the proposed model, there are eight steps in the planning process, including policy framework, task, situational analysis, identification of problem and consultation, aims and objectives, possibilities, implementation and evaluation (Figure 1). The mentioned gender-specific frameworks build in gender-and women-sensitive considerations at each step and use gender-based analysis as a key element. The gender-sensitive framework I propose would help to analyze not only the concept of gender roles and needs but also relations of power in planning adult education programs, including distance education. The objective of this framework is not only theoretical but practical. While this framework in this context

ostensively applies to the MBA/MPA program but individuals wishing to apply this framework need not begin at step 1 but may start at one of the other steps and use them as applicable to the program and organization.

**Figure 2: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**



## **1. Policy framework:**

The first stage of Figure 2 (policy framework) can take place at the beginning of the cycle or periodically in different phases of the program. The policy framework helps to establish links between educational policy and developmental policy with a view to strengthening distance education.

Engendering the policy framework means, for example, exchange of policies and programme information on different agencies' experiences of application of gender analysis to distance education. A comment from a GLD staff education specialist shows that GLD has started thinking of new ways to enhance gender perspectives within the policy:

*Nelson: One of the tried out [methods] is talk to institutions and we see what their gender policy is... (21/03/06)*

This talking can be done with the collaboration of staff in the organizations and or organizing workshops and training sessions that would empower women and finally help in making possible changes in program development policy. In other words, the aim would be translation of skills into planning practices.

Workshops or training sessions are useful in bringing various stakeholders involved in the policy reform process together for a shared purpose. Workshop methodology is considered as an action training which focuses on learning and application. In setting the goals, content, language and 'culture' of training, it is important to consider who provides the training. How can an outside consultant successfully undertake training? First of all, it should be taken into consideration that according to Anderson, 'Training is not teaching.... Training can be defined as the expansion or consolidation of technical skills to put knowledge into practice...' (cited in Moser, 1993, p.184). Therefore, teachers or gender planners are not always good trainers. The identity of the trainers shapes the production of knowledge about

gender relations, and therefore also affects gender policy. For example, a trainer from a Third World country will interpret the complexities and dilemmas of gender differently than a trainer from the First World.

To create gender-aware policies within the organization, an outside gender trainer can often be adequate, but if the purpose of training is to translate skills into the specific context, then a co-trainer from within the organization is desirable. The co-trainer can identify and articulate the opportunities for the policy development process and can follow-up results from successful training. While the outsider trainer may be competent, they may also lack the necessary status and position to do follow-up. It is also wise to use supporting materials for the training which are currently in use within the organization and then build from there. This makes the training central to the current work experience of the staff. Moreover, it creates a network of 'like-minded' people in the organization who can implement policy change. In this instance, GLD offered a gender training workshop to all staff of the organization focusing on the Education and Learning and Livelihood sectors. While data on the nature and impact of this training was not available, the very fact of the training itself is a positive sign in promoting gender policies in the organization.

Policy change will not only come from the above, but also from the interaction between the compelling impetus of those who will directly benefit from the change and those within the structures of power who have the capacity to look 'outside the box' and share their wider vision within the organization. This does not imply women taking control previously held by men, but rather transforming the nature of power relations. In other words we can say that power may be understood as 'power within' or self confidence, 'power with', or capacity to work with others towards a common goal, and the 'power to' effect change and

take decisions rather than ‘power over’ others (Porter, Symth & Sweetman, 1999). Working towards a gender-aware policy thus means changing the gender-based power balance in the direction of greater equality. Organizational development refers to activities intended to bring about change within organizations, with the objective of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the work. This way the process of development could be shifted to needs and interests of women.

### Questions for Program Planners in Step 1

Basic questions for the Policy Framework Stage include:

- ❖ How were stakeholders identified to create a gender-balanced team in the policymaking process?
- ❖ What is the attitude of senior management staff to gender issues? Who does the management consult with (internally and externally) about gender issues?
- ❖ What are the decision-making bodies? What role do women and men play in decision-making?
- ❖ Has the organization sought grants considering gender issues?
- ❖ What tools can be used to integrate a gender perspective into organizational budgetary policy?

One way to allow decision-makers to obtain a clear understanding of gender-sensitive policy (not adopted by GLD) is to have a *gender-sensitive policy reform checklist*. This is a set of questions which will help describe a plan for successful implementation of gender-sensitive policy. Some questions posed are:

- ❖ What is the nature of the policy benefiting men and women in the organization?
- ❖ What motivated stakeholders to 'genderise' policy of the organization?
- ❖ How do issues specific to men and women translate into organizational policy?
- ❖ What parameters of empowerment of women would bring about by the new policy?
- ❖ How are modifications to the policy implemented for equitable access in initiatives of the organization?

Addressing these questions will help to promote gender equality and women's voice in the decision-making process.

## **2. Context Analysis:**

The second stage of framework, context analysis, helps us to think about the circumstances that shapes the relationships and dynamics of a situation. It is a critical issue because for example in India '...the choice of subjects in higher education is largely dictated by the socialization within the family, school and society....Therefore, subordination of women has not really disappeared and is quite evident in the form of gender differences in education and noticeable in the selection of fields of learning rather than the access to these' (S & Reddy, 1996, p. 58). This highlights women's basic (practical) needs and strategic needs and considers how best they might be met. Therefore what approaches needs to be taken?

Consultation with men and women, in every stage of program development as well as the formal public review process, helps in prioritising practical or strategic needs which are

amenable to planning for distance education. This will highlight where women are absent in program planning and how their contribution can be helpful. However, inclusion of women as team members or beneficiaries of the planning process does not always guarantee equality goals.

Active consultation and involvement of women does not guarantee that women's needs will be met, and this immediately poses a theoretical, as well as practical problem of whether 'women' is viewed as a general category or a homogenous group for analysis. For example, views and experiences of academic women in the planning team may differ with other women within the institution. Therefore, women learners' participation within the planning team would make difference during the planning process.

In GLD, staff member Irene highlighted the fact that no men or women learners were included in the planning process: *Consultants [were included]... but not learners (28/03/06)*. It is also important to take into consideration the identity of the consultants. The specificity of their approaches to connecting ideas, experience and reality is crucial for a program. One of the former staff mentioned that: *There was ...a consultant—a professor from the University of Toronto whose name escapes me, but who contributed significantly in ensuring academic coherence from the disparate parts (28/03/06)*. It will be further helpful to have a diversity expert within a team who can address the challenge of institutional and program diversity. Having a diversity expert on the planning team would enrich understanding of cross-border needs of men and women. Most importantly at this stage of context analysis, he or she can assist in conducting needs assessment to determine the diversity of learners' needs for the program.

Women are also married mothers, daughters, mothers-in-law, etc. Therefore, authority, obligation and workload in the family vary accordingly. Their ability to participate in the program is affected by the roles they play in the family. Minority women learners—for example, widows, divorced or single mothers—can be helped through special provision. Activities that lessen women’s burden of work should be encouraged.

As far as the available data shows, no context analysis was done before the MBA/MPA program was planned. Had this been done, it may have revealed much about the context of women learners, and the practical and strategic needs which might have been addressed by the program.

#### Questions for Program Planners in Step 2

- ❖ What are major issues and concerns faced by women managing multiple roles in their lives within the local context?
- ❖ How can resources be enhanced within the community to address these issues and concerns?
- ❖ In what ways are both women’s and men’s identities such as gender, age, culture, education, physical or mental abilities of clients and geography considered while conducting context analysis?
- ❖ Are there any “best practices” or “lessons learned” that show gender equity considerations are congruent with national priorities?

### **3. Identification of Problem & Consultation:**

The third stage in the gender analysis of distance education planning addresses preliminary ideas and issues to be looked into as a step in the identification of the problem. A

gender-sensitive needs assessment can help planners decide whether the program should be developed or improved, the focus of the program and how the program should be delivered. It is necessary to identify the program goals clearly then identify what data are needed, identify available data, identify data that must be gathered, gather data, identify discrepancies, and then begin the program development process. If the data collection techniques are not gender-sensitive at the initial stage, particularly when it comes to the measurement of women's needs and interests, the planners might be misled and influenced by inaccurate information.

Data collection techniques play a major role in identifying the problems and their cause before a program is planned. One of the important aspects after data collection is that data can be broken down by gender. Gender-sensitive data in distance education would help the program planner to ask more specific questions and develop options, to determine whether or not the initiatives would be realistically feasible to implement, and assess if they are likely to achieve desired results within an acceptable time frame. For example MBA women learners to begin with in India are limited. Clearly, women are not a homogenous group and data can be broken down into class, caste, religion, age, ethnicity, language and social status, among other things. The concept of identity and the intersections of diversity are quite deep-rooted characteristics.

Staff in the GLD's executive program noted that there was a lack of systematic needs assessment for the program:

*James: At [the] starting stage we had neither the time nor the resources to do more than take the units as they stood (06/04/06).*

*Irene: We talk a lot on the importance of needs assessment, [and with] time and resources allowed, we will definitely go into it. But there are situations sometimes we take shortcuts as due to time and resource constraints.*

### Questions for Program Planners in Step 3

- ❖ What different situations of diverse women are often unseen or perhaps not considered during identification of problems?
- ❖ What data is needed to identify women's priorities on needs and interests that are potential to self-advancement?
- ❖ How to identify the likely causes of the most pressing problems in the local context?
- ❖ How to generate a priority ranking of needs and interests of men and women?
- ❖ How will the analysis be communicated to both women and men while planning programs?

#### **4. Aims & Objectives:**

In the fourth stage, aims and objective are set. This gives a clear statement of the anticipated results to be achieved through an educational program. A comprehensive set of aims and objectives would help to address short, medium and long term issues, for example, for changes in both practical and strategic gender needs. Creating of a strong steering committee of a program and adopting quality guidelines across the consortium and standardization of program achievement across partners will help planners provide benchmarks for determining whether the program is successfully reaching its gender goals. This will help the policy makers of the institution decide whether and how to support gender initiatives. Planning for gender sustainability should not be an after-thought or an add-on to your program planning.

Gender performance indicators at this stage will guide the program in planning, implementation and accessing program outcome in a gender-sensitive way. If the planner or

the team can identify some indicators quickly, then the program has a clear set of objectives, but if not, objectives require specificity and rethinking. Gender-sensitive indicators are part of the monitoring and evaluation process to assess if the program has resulted in equitable results for both men and women. A strong focus is also required to identify gender-sensitive indicators that relate to the goal of the program.

In regard to GLD, with data gathered from the MBA/MPA program, there is no evidence that shows that gender-sensitive or other performance indicators were developed at the initial stages of the program planning process.

#### Questions for Program Planners in Step 4

- ❖ Who will take the lead in setting aims and objectives of the program?
- ❖ In order to promote equity, how will the diversity of learners be recognized?
- ❖ How will women contribute to setting aims and objectives for specific learning experiences within the local context?
- ❖ How might the existing aims and objectives of the program be adopted or modified to better fit the gendered country context and institutional setting?

Applying Longwe's Empowerment Framework (Leach 2004), below are gender-sensitive indicators and questions that can be classified under the four categories of Welfare, Participation, Access and Control (Table 3).

**Table 3: Gender-Sensitive Indicators of the Program**

<b>Equality Factor</b>	<b>Addresses Gender</b>
Welfare	Will the program benefit men and women differently? If so, how? How are different priorities set for different groups of women? How can it address practical needs? Does it require different course content?
Participation	How many women and men sit on the program planning committee? How are planning members selected? Who selects them? Is it important that more women are involved? What conditions would allow women to participate more? How are decisions made in the planning committee?
Access	Are men and women disadvantaged to in terms of access, and if so how? How to increase the quality and sustainability of the curriculum? Is the cost of the program accessible? What opportunities exist for increasing women's access to resources?
Control	How many women are engaged in leadership roles in the program? If not, What are the barriers? What opportunities exist for increasing women's control of and benefits from resources?

### **5. Possibilities:**

The fifth stage is to plan for possible situations arising in women and men learners' lives which affect their participation in the program. Focusing on multiple identities and 'difference' can capture some of the fluidity and complexity of social relationships and identities as they are lived by both men and women. This is because sometimes lives of men and women are not only shaped by gender relations but by other dynamics of marginalization including class, caste, religion, ethnicity, disability, age is important to consider while planning. Brainstorming works very effectively at this step during the planning process

(Boothroyd, 1991). Intuition (a much undervalued part of the mind-body network despite its importance in the learning process (Semetsky, 2004)) can be helpful here too: it helps to create a picture in our mind of how gender needs to be incorporated in the analysis where other dimensions of sensitivities cut across. This helps to fill the gap when planners to anticipate challenges.

Findings for GLD did not show whether the planning team of the MBA/MPA program had a shared understanding of situations that might have cropped up or how the group needed to think strategically. The low enrolment of women in the program clearly showed that the planners did not prioritize an understanding of barriers to participation for women.

#### Questions for Program Planners in Step 4

- ❖ How are past experiences on gender aspects of the issue given weight in the analysis of the options?
- ❖ What are the consequences of adopting or not adopting gender inclusive options?
- ❖ What resources are needed to tackle needs and interests for women, remembering these are in constant flux?
- ❖ What does the program anticipate benefit for other family members with women's participation?

#### **6. Implementation and Transfer of Learning:**

The sixth and eighth stages of the framework are implementation, and transfer of learning, respectively. Transfer of learning also takes place after step seven, evaluation. This

can occur while the program is in progress and /or after the program is complete. During the transfer of learning the usefulness of ‘empowerment and what it means in real development (or education) context’ (Leach, 2003, p.69) is important. But this also depends upon how programs are designed and ‘what kind of empowerment and [transformatory potential] is involved in a particular project or programme’ (Leach, 2003, p. 69) to promote transfer of learning. Some programs help women to develop the ability of critical thinking and foster decision-making and action. But it is wise to take into consideration realistic expectations of transfer of learning.

Baseline data is required to monitor the progress of the program and identify the gender-equality goals are being achieved, if at all, while the program is in progress. These data can be quantitative (for example, the number of women attending the course) or qualitative (for example, distribution of benefits of the resources). Relevant information will help planners to assess how much progress is being made towards a certain objective. Monitoring of the gender-related budget spending should also be carried out.

Use of case study or studies is an effective method that shows practical application as a part of course content, and enhances transfer of learning. Selecting the case or cases to be studied is a difficult task. What kinds of cases would be relevant and who is involved in deciding cases? A major effort is required for screening case studies. A gender-sensitive case or cases is required to show how theory is applied in real practice. It is beneficial to show linkage situations and how outcomes are produced.

The findings for GLD did not show whether the Academic Board of the MBA/MPA program followed up with participants of IGNOU to see if any transfer of learning had occurred. While it is not possible to follow up with all participants, a small group of women

learners could be interviewed about whether they had applied their knowledge while they were learning or had applied it within the short term. Likewise, gender-sensitive case studies could have been employed in the curriculum, but were not.

#### Questions for Program Planners in Step 6

- ❖ What are some specific techniques to increase motivation of women to participate in the program and increase its transformatory potential?
- ❖ Which women have been reached/not reached?
- ❖ How could the transformatory potentiality of women be measured later while the program is in progress or completed?
- ❖ Who measures program outcomes for women, how and under what circumstances?

#### Questions for Program Planners in Step 8

- ❖ How have women responded to the services of the program on offer? How have they benefited: (i) themselves; (ii) in the context of their household/families; (iii) in relation to wider society?
- ❖ Is the learning designed to empower women and men learners, building on their knowledge and strengths?
- ❖ What are the barriers to transfer of learning for men and women?
- ❖ How can these barriers be overcome?

## **7. Evaluation:**

Evaluation is always challenging for a program. Some say that it should be done by an unbiased outside expert using stated institutional and program objectives as criteria for judgment. But a crucial point is that the outsider may not know the details of the complexities of the programme. Therefore, at the beginning of program planning, it should be decided whether an evaluator is inside or outside of the group. The identity and social location of the evaluator should not be ignored. Evaluators who have little experience or knowledge of the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity may not be suitable to decide whether the program is appropriate in meeting the needs.

The program coordinator of the MBA/MPA program in the IGNOU noted that there was an external review progress of the program, without offering much specificity of results: *'An external review committee from South Africa was assigned the project of programme review and their report was placed at the Academic board. Progress has varied across participating countries but can overall be classified as good' (30/03/06).*

Ethical judgment is also a part of the evaluation process. Therefore, it is important to engage men and women from different levels of the program in discussing moral questions and issues during the process of evaluation. The framework invites those involved in evaluation of programs to consider gender issues. This means listening to women and men in the project and collaborating with partner organizations to give an idea whether the project has positive outcomes. Moreover, formative evaluation of transfer of learning can be done to improve or change a program while it is in progress. As mentioned before, setting up of gender-sensitive indicators at the early stage of the planning process will allow for the clearest possible demonstration that gender roles and responsibilities, and particularly the

needs and priorities of women, have been carefully considered and addressed through well-designed objectives, activities.

#### Questions for Program Planners in Step 7

- ❖ Was a baseline and/or diagnostic study undertaken before the start-up of program activities? How?
- ❖ To what extent have expected positive and negative effects on women occurred in practice?
- ❖ How have men's perceptions of gender roles changed and how has their behaviour changed in practice?
- ❖ How do men and women benefit from the program differently?

#### **Gaps in GLD Gender-Sensitive Planning**

In applying the researching gender-sensitive program planning framework to the case of GLD, it is clear that there are both strengths and gaps in the organization's planning process. The wider Policy Framework in which GLD operates was very supportive of gender-sensitive changes in both organizational structure and program planning. As Chapter 5 showed, the organization had a clear mandate from above to promote gender equity policies and programs, and had made key advances in mainstreaming gender equity and sensitivity. The hiring of gender specialist, the expressed desire to bring men into the process and the gender training workshop were all examples of positive movement in this direction. As noted, further progress might be made by using such tools as a gender-sensitive policy reform checklist for the implementation of gender-sensitive policy, and further networking

with other organizations on gender policy initiatives. In the second step of context analysis, the opportunity to highlight the diverse contexts of women learner's lives—the diversity of learners, the constraints and barriers to their participation, etc. was missed. In fact, in general, adult learner beneficiaries were not included in the program planning process. This gap might be remedied in situational analysis incorporated into future program planning, perhaps drawing on the resources of outside consultants such as a diversity expert.

In the third stage of planning, a gender-sensitive needs assessment, with gender-sensitive data to assess the feasibility of implementing the program, its chances of success, etc. would have been valuable, but was not conducted. Here, data on educational needs, both practical and strategic, might have been broken down into class, caste, religion and social status, and used to inform step four, the setting of aims and objectives. In this fourth step, a steering committee might be created, and aims and objectives set with gender performance indicators for Welfare, Participation, Access and Control, as indicated in Table 3 above. The fifth stage would then mean planning for possible situations arising in learners' lives which affect their program participation, with an awareness that these are shaped by gender relations but by other dynamics of marginalization including class, caste, ethnicity, disability, age. In this step, brainstorming and intuition might help to fill in the picture.

The sixth stage of implementation would require baseline and monitoring both quantitative and qualitative data to assess if gender-equality goals are being achieved during program implementation. Levels of women's participation, distribution of benefits of the resources depends upon gender-related budget spending. In step eight, transfer of learning, gender-sensitive case studies might be used to promote transfer and to determine if course content can be applied in practice by learner. As noted above, a group of women learners

could be interviewed about the knowledge gained and applied both during and after the program. Finally, summative program evaluation might be done by an outside expert using program objectives as criteria for evaluation, with attention paid to the identity and social location of the evaluator. Evaluators should have experience and knowledge of the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity. In ethical terms, it is also important to engage men and women from different levels of the program to discuss the process of evaluation, including gender issues.

In general, the gender-sensitive planning framework would help planners to gain insight into gender relations in their program area. It would also help them to gain insight into whether institutions involved have the capacity to deal with gender issues in program planning and implementation in distance education. An initial and crucial step of this framework would help to identify different categories of women that would benefit from the program designed. This highlights women of different classes, age groups and marital status. The framework also has some scope for anticipating negative effects.

Gender analysis related to activities at the various stages of development, would not be effective, however, unless it meets certain requirements. Firstly, a program of activities must be developed gradually. A sound institutional framework needs to be taken care of to allow smooth collaboration between partners. The programs' technical and social components need to be properly matched. The implementation stage is quite crucial and the planner should keep in mind that effectively involving women in the program would take time. Therefore, collaboration with the partner organization would be effective if it focuses on concrete activities in which each party has a clear role to play. Moreover, a set of gender

indicators for distance education must be developed for the program. Those using gender frameworks must not ignore cultural details

## **Summary**

The gender-specific framework builds in gender- and women-sensitive considerations at each step and uses gender-based analysis as a key element. It is a practical instrument designed to integrate a gender analysis into distance education. The Harvard and Moser frameworks focus on concepts of gender roles, gender needs and approaches to gender and development planning. But it is important to realize that the power of this framework is limited. We need to be realistic about what can be achieved in distance education planning. There are mechanisms for analysis, but they do not lead automatically to an improved set of conditions.

The steps of the framework are not exclusive and actually work best with a combination of the ‘beneficiary’ groups, i.e. both men and women. This means promoting the involvement of women and men in decision-making at all levels of the program. Women’s involvement at all steps promotes active consultation and involvement of women within the organization in prioritizing organizational and program needs. This inclusion of women will help highlight where women are absent in the planning process and how then to include them from the policy to the evaluation stage. As part of this, context-specific sex-disaggregated data should be gathered. Above all, it is important that detailed understanding and analysis of the specific and distinct needs of women are undertaken to reach gender equality goals at the organizational and program level.

The foregoing framework should be viewed as a flexible but not a rigid tool. In this spirit, the next chapter highlights recommendations for further research and practice. It is

based on the belief that we can learn together, and continue to work collectively in this process essential for future progress.

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

My own experience of program planning in India and Canada, and the recognition that planners are reluctant to employ gender-sensitive analysis in program development, inspired me to conduct research on this issue and write a thesis. My goal in this study was to develop a deeper understanding of how the gender-sensitive policy approach outlined by the Global Learning for Development could be implemented in the Executive MBA/MPA distance education program. I wanted to understand how different program stakeholders believe that gender sensitive program initiatives could be addressed and implemented, and, most important, what a more general framework for gender-sensitive program planning might look like.

Working on this thesis has given me a chance to see how GLD has started fostering co-operation based on an understanding that working together (men and women) for gender equality will be more effective than working in isolation within the organization. Another point which resonates with me is that having a gender officer position, establishing a gender committee, continuing gender training, allotting certain amounts for gender work and developing gender resources jointly with partner organizations, all showed that the organization has started promoting gender work through working with staff and partners.

GLD's gender equality policy was strongly influenced by the larger policy context and these wider policies helped to push GLD to address gender equality at the local organizational level but more determination and individual initiative from the officials and staff of the organization is required to address the challenges of program planning in a gender-sensitive way.

In general, my study also revealed the strength of inter-institutional collaboration and cross-border distance education that helped learners acquire skills and enrich their professional development through continuing education. But what makes a difference in this distance learning is not only the medium of learning itself, but how well it served men and women equally. This is something which is of primary concern for me. My research on the MBA/MPA program confirmed the importance of sound planning, and also of the need for strengthened gender analysis.

Program planning has struggled through the years in terms of recognizing gender and diversity. In my thesis I have identified myself as a woman from the 'Third World' who worked as a program planner in India, came to Canada by 'choice', have tried to explore gender and program planning from her own lense. The categories of First World and Third World bring differences of experiences and identities of women. Al in all, my identity and experience as a 'Third World' woman helps me to realize that universal principles of gender and development cannot be applied uncritically across region, culture, class and ethnicity. Also, one cannot assume that all men and women in the 'Third World' have similar needs and interests. This is good to know for those organizations and planners who have otherwise ignore specific contexts and local needs while planning a gender-sensitive program. Proper attention should be paid by the planners to the specificity of the context and learners while planning a program. I believe planners from different fields; for example, educational planners, community planners, urban planners, etc need to talk with one another about what gender and diversity in planning is going.

In this research, I have attempted to position myself as a 'partial; insider' on a daily basis during my field work. I believe this heightened my understanding of the sensitivities of

the informants and helped to do justice to their voices. My experiences as a researcher suggest that the insider-outsider conflict represents an embedded contradiction that all researchers who are working on gender need to confront.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This thesis is a result of an analysis within a limited time frame. Some issues were not resolved during that time period and other issues were not raised. This speaks to a need for further research on different aspects of planning.

1. Drawing from my own observation, further research using feminist ethnographic study where women are observed in the act of planning can make a difference. This helps to ‘deconstruct’ the planning practice in adult education and ‘reconstruct’ them with broader possibilities.
2. Intersectional needs analysis within the planning process needs further research. Intersectional analysis is not just another ‘buzz-word’ or a mantra but needs to be investigated in practice and developed under feminist theory.
3. Research is needed on ethical issues and dilemmas which planners experience while planning distance education programs around gender equity.
4. Further research would be useful to develop gender-inclusive educational content and delivery mechanisms within distance education contexts.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The objectives of this study were not only applied to theory, but also to actual practice. The recommendations below address ways to improve the participation of men and women within educational organizations such as GLD to develop more gender-sensitive programs.

### Recommendations for the Organization

1. Organizational change depends on collective learning. This means that the organization has to be open to learning and research, and prepared to develop mechanisms for organizational change.
2. Policy and program change will not only come from the above, but from the interaction between the compelling impetus of those who will directly benefit from the change and those within the structures of power who have the capacity to look 'outside the box' and share their wider vision within the organization. This way the process of development would be shifted to responds to the needs and interests of women. Working towards gender-aware policy and program approaches this means changing the gender-based power balance in the direction of greater equality. Organizational development refers to activities intended to bring about change within organizations, with the objective of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the work.
3. Transparency and accountability are key concepts in creating a learning organization. Therefore it is advisable to make managers accountable for improved performance in incorporating gender-based perspectives into different programs
4. Ethics training for all employees in the organization is useful.
5. Gender-sensitive budget are not separate budget for men or women but budget should be broken down according to its impact on different groups of women and men. Monitoring of the gender-related budget spending should be carried out.
6. The organization should expand the existing MBA/MPA program by introducing courses related to gender issues in management. This will help address the needs of women and men in management roles or who aspire to become managers. The course

should critically examine the barriers to women achieving their full potential in management and how these may be overcome. An ethical approach will be promoted by considering how values are arrived at and how they can be applied in a pressurized workplace. This may also increase women's participation in the program. Other gender-focused distance education courses should be applied in collaboration with universities of Asia and Africa.

### Recommendations for Program Planners

1. Creating sustainability plans will help planners to clarify where they want their programs to go in future. These plans can provide benchmarks for determining whether the program is successfully reaching its goals. This will help the policymakers of the institution decide whether and how to support certain initiatives. This can be done through orientation of the program and on-going training. Planning for sustainability should not be an after-thought or an add-on to program planning.
2. Program planners who are planning entering the field and those who are already in the field should focus on developing program success indicators that will help to understand how much progress is being made toward achieving certain objectives. This is a means of measuring performance of a specific program by comparing actual results with expected results. Preference for quantitative indicators and qualitative characteristics aspects are important for a program. Simple quantitative indicators or 'counts' often capture a thin slice of the program. For e.g. insufficient enrolment may indicate that planning process was faulty but there are other indicators that needed to be considered for a planner like technical, social and economic indicators. A word of

caution, sometimes an indicator does not have sufficient level of specificity to be operational because it was not possible to define it in a way applicable to all countries.

3. Creating of a strong steering committee of a program and adopting quality guidelines across the consortium and standardization of program achievement across partners. Contracting a diversity expert within team who can address the challenge of institutional and program diversity.
4. Pilot-testing of some courses using time line long enough to allow for revisions and changes in the program will give a clear picture of the objectives of the program.

### **Closing Comments**

I recall that there was time when gender issues were not considered as a concern in the development sector. The situation on the ground is changing but relatively slowly. Gender issues are a major concern for educational planners. I learned from this thesis process that gender is a personal as well as a development issue which is challenging in many ways. Perhaps my research can help provide some insights to all program planners irrespective of where they belong. It is my hope that the framework be piloted or tested focusing on management and other continuing education programs in the North and South. Due to limited time and resources I could not look into other areas of gender analysis. In the future, I would like to loosen the grip of gender as a distinct category of analysis and focus on diversity and sustainability as the category of analysis in the program planning field. In this way I am willing to research beyond the boundaries of place and identity and consider global diversity and citizenship in all its forms.

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## APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INITIAL CONTACT

### THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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**Towards a Gender-Sensitive Framework for Distance Education in Planning for Development: A Case Study of an Executive MBA/MPA Program**

November 10, 2005

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Koyali Burman, and I am a graduate student pursuing my MA degree in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am researching program planning in distance education. I want to understand how different program stakeholders believe that gender sensitive program initiatives can be addressed and implemented in distance education for international development.

For my MA thesis research, I am undertaking a case study of the Global Learning for Development and the MBA/MPA Program in particular. As an expert in program planning and development, your participation in this study would be invaluable to me. Therefore, I am writing to see if you would grant me an interview in the following two weeks. Would you be kind enough to let me know if it is possible for me to conduct a face-to-face interview with you? If so, I shall defer to your schedule and choice of location. There is no remuneration for participating in the research, but results of the study will be available in your request. The interview shall be no longer than one hour, and your personal information shall not be available to anybody other than the principal investigator, who is my supervisor, and myself.

Your contribution would be greatly appreciated. May I hear from you at your earliest convenience? You can contact me by telephone on (604) 827-2791 or by return email: [kburman@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:kburman@interchange.ubc.ca).

Sincerely yours,

Koyali Burman

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## APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

### THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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**Towards a Gender-Sensitive Framework for Distance Education in Planning for  
Development: A Case Study of an Executive MBA/MPA Program**

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to understand how the gender sensitive policy approach outlined in the Global Learning for Development's Millennium Development Goals could be implemented in the Executive MBA/MPA distance education. You have been asked to participate in this study because of your expertise in the area of program planning and development. This project is research for the co-investigator's M.A. degree thesis.

**Study Procedures:**

You shall be asked to participate in an interview of one hours' length in English regarding planning programs in your organization and historical backgrounds and policies. You shall

have an opportunity to review the transcript of your interviews, and to make changes, deletions or additions to any of the points made earlier.

There are no known risks associated with this study. However, given the small number of individuals involved in the study, all working at the Global Learning for Development, please be aware that it may be possible for staff to guess the identity of other participants, even though all interviews will be kept strictly confidential and all findings reported anonymously.

**Confidentiality:**

Your identity shall be kept confidential. Numerical identifiers will be used on all tapes and transcripts. All notes shall be taken without describing who made the statement. All study documents in paper form shall be kept in a locked filing cabinet. All the study documents in the computer will be password-protected. Only the principal investigator and the co-investigator shall have access to the data. You will not be identified by your name in any reports of the completed study. Reports generated from this study shall not reveal details about individuals.

**Remuneration/Compensation:**

You shall not receive remuneration to participate in this study.

**Contact for information about the study:**

If you have questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Koyali Burman, the co-investigator.

**Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:**

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

**Consent:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate. You can withdraw from the study at any time.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

You do not waive any legal rights by signing this consent form.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

---

Participant's printed name

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

## **APPENDIX III: PILOT STUDY**

### ***INTERVIEW QUESTIONS***

#### **A. Introduction and Background:**

1. Tell me about yourself: what's your professional background?
2. What kind of program and course planning experiences have you had before?

#### **B. Planning Experiences in Development:**

1. What educational courses for development interest you?
2. Take me through the steps as you plan a new educational program?
3. What challenges have you experienced while planning and developing online courses?
4. How do you think gender has been taken into account while planning programs in any of the development organization where you worked before?
5. How would you involve women in maximum policies?
6. Tell me about your most recent program planning effort; who was involved in the? How did you negotiate?
7. Describe the outcome of the planning?
8. How to deal with an unprecedented situation?

#### **C. Planning and gender/culture analysis**

1. Could you please reflect any of the international organization's approach to integrating gender in their policy?
2. How do you think women's needs could be determined in the planning process?
3. How are cross-cultural issues addressed while planning a distance education program in any of the development organization you know?
4. How can women be included in the Executive program?
5. What performance indicators or quality standards do you use in monitoring the quality of the distance education courses?
5. Could you please think of a metaphor that captures what planning is like?

## **Closing Remarks**

1. What advice do you have regarding this study?

## **APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **A. Introduction and Background**

1. Do you have any questions about the study, its purpose and the procedures?
2. Tell me about yourself: what's your professional background?

### **B. Experiences in development**

1. What kind of program and course planning/development experiences have you had before in regard to course content and delivery?
2. What educational topics for planning and development interests you?

### **C.Planning in GLD and gender/cultural analysis**

1. Could you please reflect regarding GLD's commitment in integrating gender in their policy?
2. How has the present project MBA/MPA been built?
3. Who contributed (and on what basis) in deciding the content of courses --e.g. course designers, tutors, media specialists, managers, learners, outside bodies etc?
4. How do you think women's needs could be determined in the planning process?
5. How do you think MBA/MPA's program objectives are related to women's needs?
6. How are cross-cultural issues addressed while planning a distance education program?
7. In general how would you like to address gender issues in the distance education programs?
8. What work does GLD do on gender exclusively?
9. How international agencies and donors been involved with GLD in developing distance program focusing on gender?

#### **D.Reflections of the planning process**

1. Were you in the planning process of the MBA/MPA program?
2. Do you think a gender sensitive policy objective of the Millennium Development Goal has been integrated in the MBA/MPA program?
3. If not how would you like to include?
4. What kind of decisions do you make on gender?
5. What performance indicators or quality standards does GLD use in monitoring the quality of the distance education courses?

#### **E.Closing remarks**

1. What other comments would you like to make about the MBA/MPA program and gender analysis?
2. What advice do you have regarding this study?