

## Offerings of women in the transformation of African higher education: A retrospective overview

### Introduction

Most African countries gained their independence in the 1960s. However, fifty years on countries on the continent still lag in higher education transformation. Studies suggest that the higher education sector is still plagued by its colonial and apartheid legacies (Brock-Utne, 2008; Jinadu, 2010), as well as other challenges such as lack of resources, skills flight and consequent staff shortages, lack of institutional independence from the typically centralised state, and curricula that are outdated and unresponsive to African needs and expectations (Potokri, 2016). It is remarkable that despite these challenges, the sector with some forms of government and continental agency commitments has been through a rigorous process of transformational restructuring at both institutional and national levels (Mekgwe, Made & Ramtohul, 2010). While the impact of such commitments on the progress achieved is questionable, and perhaps far from expectations in comparison to international or standard practices, the issues of inclusion and exclusion, according to Trust Africa, a pan-African foundation, remain crucial to the development of the sector (see Trust Africa policy brief, 2010).

In Africa, social and political inequalities are endorsed through cultural and traditional practices, and thus, reflect in all sectors including higher education. These inequalities do not only shape the sector but affect the aspirations of men and women differently. In recent times, with the increase in hunger and thirst for higher education by women together with supportive policies, women inclusion in higher education is beginning to show some form of improvement (Potokri, 2014b). The work of Davies Norman entitled *Heart of Europe* (1984), and that of Kornat and Micgiel, *The Policy of Equilibrium and Polish Bilateralism*, (2007) indicate that

there is nothing about us without us (literally nothing about women without women), therefore, it becomes imperative to ruminate that women themselves have in one way or the other contributed to the development or transformation of higher education on the continent of Africa, especially when their inclusion, one of the key themes in African renaissance, is espoused. As interesting as their involvement seems, Christian (2005) notes that there is a lack of research into the roles of women in pan-African history, and this includes higher education.

Different women, such as Constance Cummings-John (Liberian revolutionary/activist); Funmilay Ransome Kuti and Margaret Ekpo (Nigerian activists/revolutionary) have contributed to higher education in different ways (see Johnson and Oyinade, 2003) but in this article the focus will be mainly on Charlotte Maxeke, a revolutionary South African woman. A South African woman was deliberately chosen as the main focus because South African higher education is among top ranked in Africa (ThisDay, 2015). The country also boasts the highest enrolment rate on the continent (Potokri, 2011; 2016).

The purpose of this article is twofold: (1) to examine the roles of women in the transformation of higher education; and (2) to identify the legacy these transformation offerings translate into for women. The article is organised as follows: firstly, the origin of transformation in higher education systems to global massification of education in the background section is traced. Secondly, evidence from extant literature is engaged in an attempt to comprehend and examine the roles of women in the transformation of higher education. Two crucial issues – challenges for African higher education transformation and women's role in higher education development in Africa – were reviewed analytically towards transformation of higher education. Thirdly, empowerment theory, as suitable theory for the reasonable accomplishment of the purpose of this article, is presented. Lastly, the theory was applied to the discussions justifying the conclusion.

The methodology used in this article is both descriptive and exploratory. Descriptively the various contributions of African women, but specifically a South African woman (Charlotte Maxeke), toward higher education policy contestation and construction, are outlined. In short, what was done was a scoping literature review to identify profound contributions of these selected women of Africa to the transformation of higher education. As Howie, Heaney, Maxwell and Walker (1998) note a scoping literature review is a method used to ‘map’ relevant key concepts in the literature underpinning a research area. In this article, four stages of the five-stage framework, namely identify the research question; identify relevant studies; select studies; and collate, summarise and report the results as proposed by Arksey and O’Malley (2005), were followed. The stage of charting the data was not used because it does not often align with qualitative research borders, which this article adopted. Similar to the assertion of Odhav (2009), the descriptive method gives an array of the main engagements and contestations in terms of contributions from an exemplified South African woman (Charlotte Maxeke) and a few others on the continent of Africa, as the reviewed literature illuminates.

In line with the exploratory method, a cross-sectional approach was used, connoting that the views or sacrifices/contributions of selected women were based on extensive secondary source(s) data that are based on empirical findings (Odhav, 2009). This affirms that literature are research data (Lawrence, Thomas, Houghton, & Weldonv, 2015; Potokri, 2014a). In addition, Burns and Grove (2003) argue that literature are good sources of data and can also serve as reliable data for exploratory research. In the search for the literature that produced data, terminology and keywords were used. Drawing on a similar study conducted by some researchers at Cardiff University, all types of articles published in peer-reviewed journals and books were considered eligible (see Bravo, Edwards, Barr, Scholl, Elwyn, & McAllister, 2014). All final and settled-for reviews were further evaluated for relevance and credibility by a university professor and a research fellow from a different institution. Utilised data were

theorised against the foreground theoretical framework – empowerment theory to ascertain theoretical clarification in the light of meaningful transformation offerings of women to higher education.

## **Background**

The global move to massification, a process that has its origins from the 1960s onwards, has been one of the most significant aspects of transformation in higher education systems (Dunne & Sayed, 2002). Transformation is renaissance and vice versa. Msila's view that all chapters in a book about Africa renaissance simply Africanisation herald for the need for a transformed system of education in Africa (2016:57), supports our claim. Transformation is a precondition for achieving overall development that is centred on people (Bazilli, 2010); it is aimed at eradicating class and segregation of any kind between people (Potokri, 2011). The strands that constitute the ambiguous or even contradictory nature of transformation come together to facilitate or shore up the emergence of a new class fraction while simultaneously ideologically masking it (Kistner, 2011). Morley, Leach and Lugg (2009) link transformation to widening participation in higher education. Widening participation policies tie individual choices, institutional responsiveness and national and universal salvation. Within the discourse of widening participation, the balance between the individual and the collective good is complex (Ball, 1998). Governments, in a variety of national contexts, have made public commitments to addressing balanced complexities through an increase in gross enrolments (Potokri, 2011). This has been evident, for example, in South Africa, where calls have been made for a 40% participation rate of the eligible higher education cohort (Sayed, 1998). For sub-Saharan African countries, higher education has recently re-emerged as an important dimension in the development efforts of donor agencies (UNESCO, 1998; World Bank, 2000).

The transformation of higher education systems has been associated with increasing access to and participation of those who have traditionally been absent or excluded (Dunne & Sayed, 2002). This has been realised by increasing female participation, alongside increasing access for minority groups, the disabled, mature and non-residential students (ibid.:2). This suggests neoliberalism and future hope for previously excluded women. Neoliberalism in this regard conceptualises the individual as following her/his interest as an autonomous entrepreneur. It implies further that women, as individuals, have the right to pursue their educational self-interests, which will obviously boost economic benefits for them and their families, as well as for society at large (see Potokri, 2014).

Aside uniqueness, in recent enhanced and expanded involvement of women in higher education, transformational offerings of women indicate that knowledge has become tradeable (Kenway, Bullen & Robb, 2004). Towards the end of the 20th century, African countries aimed to attain parity in women's participation in both the public and private spheres – a reason for women to initiate rather than contribute to the development of higher education either as staff, students, businesswomen or philanthropists. The incorporation of women into public institutions, particularly the labour market, has been described as a major requirement for seeking parity between women and men in political and social life (Bradley, 2000). Bradley notes further that household labour is typically uncompensated, therefore, participation in the labour force is an important way for women to accrue resources that can adjust the balance of power between men and women. The research of Bradley (ibid.) shows that occupational success correlates highly with educational attainment in both developed and developing countries, hence the sacrifices and absorption of women into educational systems, particularly higher education, that is widely believed to be an effective strategy for achieving gender parity in occupational structures and public spheres in general.

## **Maxeke in focus**

Charlotte Maxeke arguably is from the Eastern Cape because some sources indicate Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape as her place of birth. This claim despite others linking her birth place to Polokwane area seems to be largely accepted because she wrote impeccably in Xhosa. She was born on 7 April 1874 (South African History Online (SAHO)). She legitimately can be considered a founder of feminism in South Africa (Madlala, 2015). In a keynote address at the Charlotte Maxeke Memorial Lecture delivered on 14 March 2015, Mrs Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education describes her as a colossal figure in the protracted liberation struggle, especially with regard to the female emancipation landscape. Maxeke's main ambition was to pursue her higher education studies further, which she eventually did at Wilberforce University in Cleveland, Ohio, USA. Being the first black South African woman to graduate with a B.Sc. degree from the University, she conceived the inspiration to encourage women to pursue higher education on her return to South Africa in 1901. To drive home the importance of higher education, she echoed these words in public spaces and at the gathering of women:

Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilised by education; they grow there, firm as weeds among stones.

Furthermore, she would say to privileged and empowered women like herself these words:

“... kill that spirit of self, and do not live above your people but live with them. If you can rise, bring someone with you.”

Her core message was not only about the fight for freedom, from exploitative and social conditions for African women but an emphasis on empowerment via education, which in her view was instrumental in women's individual and collective achievements, and emancipation.

Besides being the founder of the Bantu Women's League, she, in the company of other visionary women, founded the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) on 17 April 1954. There, the first document that called for gender equality across class, ethnic and colour lines in South Africa, was adopted and later became known as the Women's Charter. The charter calls for the total emancipation of women – that is, calling for an end to the segregation, sexism and apartheid regime (Walker, 1991). Accordingly, the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) served as the springboard for the historic 9 August 1956 Women's March in Pretoria. The march incarnates the words of Farkhonda Hassan, UN Economic Commissioner for Africa, that women's objective now is not to renegotiate their dreams, but to emphasise the accountability of all actors. Furthermore, she highlighted that they were no longer seeking promises, but were demanding action (Mutume, 2005).

Maxeke's assertiveness and bravery were exemplary to many women who bought into her ideas and eventually joined the emancipation of women campaign. These women had no doubt that the higher education qualifications that she acquired propelled her towards her accomplishments and, as such, sought to emulate her. This possibly explains why Nozizwe Madlala in her presentation at the University of Free State, South Africa on 29 August 2015, argued that Maxeke practically modelled women about the role and responsibility of higher education. Thus modernising higher education could partly be attributed to her inspiration and the example of her determination.

### **Challenges for African higher education transformation**

At early and mid-20th century, a sense of awareness swept through a handful of women who felt there was the need for enlightened women to re-examine their goals and aspirations so that the need to move them to high management positions could be pursued (Williams, 1993). She (Williams) as well as Okome (1999) and Nnaemeka (2005) note, that the fastest and surest way

to a better life, and ascension to the top careers in all walks of life, including a move away from the unpaid home job to the paid labour force, is through the attainment of a high level of education.

To offer knowledge as a power base for women and to fully integrate women into the higher education sector, Assie-Lumumba (2006) argues that higher education should not be seen as a sole space but central to the acquisition and production of knowledge that shapes the contemporary world. “In African states, social institutions of higher learning are still mostly being organised according to the parameters of colonial legacies with regard to the nature of the institutions, and the criteria of access to them” (ibid.:9). Furthermore, there are societal factors and values, such as the pressure on girls to marry and other obstacles in educational institutions that lead to gender disparity.

Farzaneh and Moghadam (2003) and Carr (1994) note that pressure on girls to marry, a factor that causes gender disparity in Africa, is dominant in Sahelian/Islamic countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal. To buttress this observation, Rathgeber (2003) points out that compared to their male counterparts, young African women in Tanzania, even with their academic achievements and potential, tend to leave school earlier to marry, in compliance with social norms. Nevertheless, the gender gap in Tanzania is narrower than in many developing countries because of its socialist legacy (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). Given global discussions on women and higher education, gender has become more integrated into the mainstream discourse on higher education in industrialised countries. However, studies on gender issues are still scarce in African countries (Morley, 2003). Morley (2003:9) found that even the more economically advanced countries, for instance, “confirm the difficulties at the policy, institutional, organisational, and micro-political level of putting in place strategies for social inclusion in higher education”. We have searched the literature from the north to the south of Africa extensively, as a means of understanding the gender discourse, particularly in



the context of women in higher education in Africa. From our reading, we understand that higher education in Africa remains mostly synonymous with men. Pereira (2002:1), in her analysis of higher education in Nigeria, notes that “although the university system tends to be spoken of in gender-neutral terms, the effects of their workings are far from gender-neutral as shown by the proportion of women students and academics”. In a study in Zimbabwe, Gaidzanwa (2007) observed a similar situation and notes that the University of Zimbabwe is an unfriendly and overtly gender-based, hostile environment for both female students and staff members. In response to the views of writers on gender neutrality in higher education institutions in Africa, Ngome (2003) admits that the situation concerning gender neutrality and male dominance is no different in Kenya. By extension to northern Africa, Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam (2003) show that issues relating to ‘maleness’ in institutions of learning remain a major challenge. According to Farzaneh and Moghadam (2003), many girls and women are still excluded from education and many of those in schools are learning too little to prepare them for the 21st-century labour market.

To simplify and summarise the writings of these authors, we align our view with that of Mlama (1998; 2001), whose research focuses on gender and higher education in Africa, that higher education is overwhelmingly characterised by ‘maleness’. Assie-Lumumba (2006) stresses that like many other social factors, gender does not constitute a variable that acts alone. It is indeed the interface with other socially significant factors that constitute solid obstacles to higher education for women (ibid.:20).

### **Women’s role in higher education development in Africa**

Notwithstanding the many challenges that mitigate women’s success in higher education, such as colonisation legacies and the gendered dichotomy or disequilibrium of higher education, African women seek higher education passionately, realising that it is a major means of

liberating themselves (Mama & Barnes, 2007; Potokri, 2014b). The antecedents to the energy that women pour into Africa's educational and intellectual development are evident in the memoirs of early women educators like Charlotte Maxeke of South Africa, Constance Cummings-John of Liberia, Ekpo and Funmilayo Kuti both of Nigeria among others, who all contributed immensely towards the development of higher education across the continent (Mama & Barnes, 2007; Mba, 1982; Johnson & Oyinade, 2003). These women according to Mama and Barnes (2007), referring to the pre-independence years (1940s-1960s) established educational institutions in their respective countries. These institutions included the vocational schools for young ladies set up by Constance Cummings-John on her return to Freetown (where she later became Africa's first woman mayor); Mrs Ekpo's educational initiatives for women in the Calabar area of southeast Nigeria; Funmilayo Kuti's workshops for illiterate market women; and other non-formal education initiatives carried out by African women in a spirit of charity (Johnson & Oyinade, 2003:22; Mama & Barnes, 2007).

Mama and Barnes (2007) also document that before the early 1900s, education among Muslim African women was carried out by mallamas, in the tradition of the 19th century scholar and teacher Nana Asma'u, daughter of Usman Dan Fodio (ibid.:2). The same authors are also of the opinion that Africa's colonial-era universities began as extensions of elitist metropolitan institutions. Although Mama and Barnes were writing about universities in particular, their conclusion suggests that at no time have women been formally excluded from Africa's post-independence higher education sector, which is something women can take pride in. It is documented that the contributions of women to the development of higher education in Africa, such as those illuminated above, carried no monetary reward (Mama & Barnes, 2007). Yet many women, in collaboration with governments, attempted to foster the transformation or development of higher education through initiatives that led to the formulation of policies favouring women's participation in higher education. For example, in South Africa, initiatives

such as the Commission on Gender Equality, the National Gender Forum, and the Office on the Status of Women continue to support efforts by higher education institutions to be more inclusive and equitable (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).

The salient point in literature is the failure to connect the efforts and initiatives of these women (e.g. Constance Cummings-John, Charlotte Maxeke, Mrs Ekpo and Funmilayo Kuti) to the *UN Declaration of the Decade of Women* in 1975, aimed at attention and actions projected at the steady increase of education consciousness or skills acquisition. The under-lying assumption of the declaration, which presumably kick-started the drive of these women, was that if women understood their conditions, knew their rights and learned skills traditionally denied to them, empowerment would follow (see Bochynek & Medel- Anonuro, 1995; Nnaemeka, 2005a; Okome, 2013).

### **Theoretical stance: empowerment theory**

This article is informed by empowerment theory. Adams (2008: xvi) defines “empowerment as the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximise the quality of their lives”. The prime target of empowerment must be women, usually low-income adult women, in the context of social justice and transformation (Segale, 1999). Empowerment is needed to break a number of real dichotomies affecting women: personally, domestically and materially; they can as well be collective, public, and ideological (Fetterman, & Wandersman, 2007). Women who are empowered should be able to stop the undesirable, transform ongoing practices and create new visions (Stromquist, 1995) and in the nutshell provide solutions to their problems because they are the only ones who can set their priorities and agenda (Nnaemeka, 2005a:7).

Empowerment theory is regarded as both a value orientation for working in the community and a theoretical model for understanding the process and consequences of efforts to exert control and influence over decisions that affect one's life, organisational functioning, and the quality of community life (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Warchausky, 1998). The theory of empowerment is directed at provision of principles and organisation of knowledge of those who genuinely seek ways to measure, rather than understand the empowerment construct as well as study empowering processes in different contexts. Thus the theory helps to advance the construct beyond a passing fad and political manipulations (Zimmerman, 2000). To understand and perhaps to apply the theory appropriately, Stromquist (1998:18) argues that "empowerment can succeed only if it is a mode of learning close to women's everyday experiences and if it builds upon the intellectual, emotional and cultural strength or agitations women bring to their social space". The convincing argument of Nelly Stromquist in her analysis of the theoretical and practical bases for empowerment indicates the creation of the critical minds requirement for a physical and reflective space where new ideas can be entertained and critiqued to promote transformational demands occurrence outside the surveillance of those who may seek to control such demands or changes.

The pedagogical rationale for empowerment as outlined in the work of Sara Evans, an experienced feminist in the US, typifies reasons as well as motivations for empowerment. Accordingly, it helps oppressed groups to develop an independent sense of work in contrast to their received definitions as second-class citizens; it creates role models of people breaking out of patterns of passivity; provides a vision of a qualitatively different future; a communication or friendship network through which a new interpretation can spread; and activating the insurgent consciousness (Evans, 1979).

From the above, it is evident that empowerment either as a 'value orientation' or a 'theoretical model' tilts towards enhancement of knowledge as a priority. This galvanises and sheds light

on the significance of higher education for women. In view of this, literacy skills acquired through formal schooling or informal schooling are thus considered a powerful empowerment agency (Bochynek & Medel-Anonuevo, 1995; Okome, 2013; Nnaemeka, 2005b). Having noted that literacy skills can be empowering, Bettina and Medel-Anonuevo, in their work entitled *Women, education and empowerment: pathways towards autonomy* (1995) posit that literacy skills must be accompanied by a process that is participatory, and content that questions established gender relations, which they underpin as a feature that unfortunately does not characterise the majority of literacy programmes. Nevertheless, Stromquist (1993) and Bown (1990), relying on evidence from Asia and Latin America, suggest that women with newly acquired literacy skills have moved from neighbourhood soup kitchens to self-help organisations. The experience of women as evidence points of Asia and Latin America could be equated rather than substituted for the African continent being the focus of this article and on assertions of Akintayo and Adiat (2013) that empowerment, a major ingredient for human capital development, is more suitable in countries with high population growth, because of the vast human resources needed for transformation of all sectors of any economy including higher education.

## **Discussion**

Many of the women who contributed to the development rather transformation of higher education in Africa, as this article reflects, were committed to selfless service to their nations and higher education. From and residing in different countries – South Africa, Nigeria and Liberia, the women who reviewed literature herein (this article focused on, demonstrated individual initiatives. They found in their respective work and careers that the best way to get something done for the good of the future, for themselves, others and the younger generation of women is to start it or do it themselves. This suggests that women at no time completely waited for government to decide the future space and inclusion of women in higher education.

Their individual actions and contributions improved the situation of the neighbourhood with respect to women at grassroots finding themselves accustomed to the higher education learning culture and spaces.

The activism of Maxeke as her life depicts, profoundly injects purpose and willingness into the trajectories and wide array of transformation-oriented initiatives sought for institutional change for the overall good of women. These initiatives partly shaped and remained relevant to South African government commitments to transformation of higher education at the dawn of democracy in 1994 and beyond. With South African initiatives such as the Accelerated Strategy and Shared Growth Initiative South Africa (ASGISA), Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) and others, the Constitution committed the state and its institutions to the assertion of the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality, the advancement of non-sexism and non-racialism, and the human rights and freedoms that the Bill of Rights proclaims; as well as to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights” embodied in the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Constitution, together with The Higher Education Act, stimulate the desirability of restructuring and transforming programmes and institutions to respond better to human resource, economic and development needs (Badat, 2010). While these initiatives remain fragments of most Acts as well as White Papers, statistics of the Council on Higher Education (2004) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (2009) indicate that student enrolments have grown from 473 000 in 1993 to 799 388 in 2008. Interpretations of statistics reveal an extensive deracialisation of the student body – with an increase in the number of enrolled women and black students (Badat, 2010).

The major offering of women to higher education lies in their concerted efforts in setting up or establishing learning institutions and political forums. The experiences and lessons learnt from these institutions were motivational, and challenged women to believe in their capabilities to excel in their various endeavours and to advance the thoughts of some into the mainstream of

higher education institutions. Maxeke's contributions made during her lifetime, as well as those of the other African women reflected in this article, signal and portray the view of Kistner (2011) that higher education "takes on the project of fashioning a linkage, designed to function as a smoothly functioning transmission belt, between disparate demographic, political, and symbolic articulations of representation, mobilising and resourcing a field of 'imaginary' politics". This is something women need in order to be relevant in an African society, where educated women, let alone the uneducated, struggle to participate in economic, social and political activities. On account of this, while holding onto the view of Kistner (2011), we argue from the empowerment theory frame that the transformation of higher education promotes/supports a broadly socially emancipatory agenda, premised on the recognition of historical disadvantage, such as the many South African women whom were inspired by Charlotte Maxeke during Apartheid and thereafter.

Although many of the established institutions may not be as large as current higher institutions of learning with different faculties, their benefits in terms of proposed support structures and models, especially as applicable to women, remain obvious perhaps even stimulating and helpful.

The offerings – sacrifices offered by data – of the reviewed literature underpin some challenges. Firstly, there is the challenge to increase access for women to higher education opportunities and help them with fundamental knowledge of their respective trade. Improved access to higher education is linked to the opening of increased employment possibilities and poverty reduction in Africa. Women's education forms part of the fundamental requirements for poverty reduction and development of the continent. Secondly, there is the need to provide gender-fair education to all citizens, women in particular. Gender-fair education involves an aggressive move away from an emphasis on separate and complementary spheres for men and women and gender-stereotyped careers, to expanded options and outcomes (Banerjere, 2010).

The attainment of such, in collaboration with women's emancipation as a means towards their empowerment and liberation, should not simply be an offshoot of a good higher education but rather an explicit, overarching goal in a healthy social environment.

## **Conclusion**

Grounded in empowerment theory and scoping literature review, this article presents an unusual concrete insight to African higher education transformation. Beaming light on the roles or lives of Maxeke and a few African women, the article divulges that women had always been fanatical about empowerment of themselves and others because women had at some points in history contributed to developmental alterations of African higher education given their enormous offerings or contributions. Obviously, as publicised in this article, whilst risking their lives in an apartheid/colonial regime where death could visit anyone who opposes the government at any time, Maxeke and her followers' offerings or roles include financial commitment; empowerment advocacy and knowledge enchanting.

Empowered African women such as the ones highlighted in this article are part of African renaissance light bearers who foresaw the empowerment need of others – less privileged women (unpowered) as a necessary commitment and role that they must perform to ignite their inner and natural capabilities for rebirth – renaissance of a new country and continent broadly. With no monetary gain thoughts, these empowered women were conscious of the need to set up structures or institutions of learning close to women to address the unpowered one's everyday experiences and challenges – a major requirement for empowerment, as empowerment theory posits. But unconscious to them was the created legacies or lessons of their offerings for higher education managers or owners, particularly in recognising higher education need for women and possibly in the understanding of how the operations could be



adopted to help promote inclusion and autonomous spaces for women in higher education in Africa – a recipe for Africa renaissance agenda.

Encouraging women to hold onto a feminist vision is profound in this article thus; it is a legacy that younger generation of women must cling to as the life of Maxeke symbolises. Keeping this vision is something that will be forever rewarding to women and their inclusion and prospect in higher education arena especially in the continent of Africa, where male chauvinism features predominately through culture and tradition.

Regardless of the revelations of this article, it has some methodological limitations. The scoping literature review comprised only articles that had the keywords in the article and title and may have likely excluded some published works on other related and important concepts. Being an article that focuses immensely on a specific woman and narrowly on a few others, we admit that the sample is relatively small, thus we presage/warn against the generalisation of the article's conclusions. Nonetheless, it would be useful to researchers and educational practitioners who would want to engage in large and similar studies in Africa in particular because of its insight into the phenomenon or debate on renaissance of higher education in Africa.

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