

# **Journal of Black Political Science**

## **Career Path Essay**

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Throughout my professional career my primary area of interest has been applied policy research, with emphasis on the intersection of gender, education and development policies in developing countries. One of my recently completed projects was a collaboration with Busitema University of Science and Technology (BU). We designed a Gender Mainstreaming Program (GMP) to meet Uganda's mandate for all development practitioners to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Since Gender Mainstreaming is a process and a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of both men and women an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs so that they benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (UNSEC,1977), its effectiveness depends in large measure on institutional capacity and commitment.

A 2010 situational analysis of gender issues at BU documented male domination throughout the University, so decreasing gender inequalities and institutionalizing gender equality policies and practices at all levels and in all areas of University life are the goals of the GMP. To strengthen the capacity of the University to achieve gender equality, we designed a professional Gender Directorate charged with implementing, monitoring and evaluating the four major components of the GMP: 1) bridging, recruitment and enhancement programs for *female students*; 2) research, recruitment, retention and professional development programs for *female staff*; 3) university-wide *curriculum engendering*; and 4) *university-wide training and capacity-building* in order to create and sustain an institutional environment where gender equality is highly valued and both male and female innovations contribute to social transformation and development. Gender research, gender budgeting, and university linkages are cross-cutting features of the multi-year Gender Mainstreaming Program.

We aligned the GMP with global, regional and nationally endorsed policies, strategic plans and reports. For example, the *UN Economic and Social Council Report* (1977), UNESCO's series on *Women in Higher Education: Issues and Perspectives* (1998), *Millennium Development Goals* (2000), and *Education for All* (2000) established global goals, requirements and benchmarks for gender equality in education. Regionally, the African Union's *New Partnership for African Development* (2005), *Decade for Education in Africa* (2006-2015), and *Education for Sustainable Development* (2006) linked education and development and set priorities and strategies for achieving gender equality and empowerment in education and development in Africa. Nationally, Article 32 of Uganda's constitution supports the use of affirmative action to address gender based disparities and the government's *Gender Policy* (1997), *Strategy for Girls Education* (2002), *Gender in Education* (2007), *Revised Gender Policy* (2007), *National Action Plan for Women* (2007) and *Education Sector Strategic Plan* (2007) provided theoretical and practical frameworks for implementing and monitoring gender sensitive and responsive systems and strategies for promoting gender equality in education and development. Extant BU policies and strategic plans provided the starting point for Gender Mainstreaming the University.

### *Methodology*

I utilize multiple research methodologies based on their potential for highlighting the best data and ideas to support the interests and needs of targeted populations. I recognize the necessity of navigating theories, policies, strategies and consequences of applied research within different political environments but I find that theoretical and methodological orthodoxy seldom fully explicate and often obfuscate conditionalities and sustainable remedies for underserved populations. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia ignited my thinking in this area when she challenged mainstream assumptions about the benefits of integrating women into national economies with a simple, powerful

statement, namely: “You can be fully integrated into your economy as a slave” (Conference on African Woman in Economic Development, 1975). This interrogation of “women *in* development” helped me move to “women *and* development” and on to “gender mainstreaming” and questions about how, when and in what ways women engage education and development on their own terms.

Most of my research projects are intersectional policy studies that are submitted as working documents - reports, position papers, concept papers, proposals, action plans and development programs. The proposal for the Tertiary Educational Linkages Project (TELP) for South Africa and reports on HBCUs and USAID, Women in War Torn Societies, Politicization of Higher Education in Bangladesh, Niger and Sri Lanka, and International Education as an Imperative are typical examples. However, some of my published research predate the popularity of intersectional analysis and reflect my struggle to eschew orthodox development theories and policies, including *Education and Nationbuilding*, 1973; “Educational Reform in Zambia,” *ZANGO*, 1977; “African Women and National Development,” *Comparative Perspectives of Third World Women*, B. Lindsey, ed.,1979; “Towards a Liberationist Ideology,” *Growth of the American Polity*, Shanley & Lewis, eds.,1983; and “Achieving Sex Equity for Minority Women,” *Handbook for Achieving Sex Equity through Education*, S. Klein, ed.,1985.

### *Inspiration and Motivation*

I engage in applied policy research because of its potential for improving the conditions of African peoples. My interest in this area began when I was a very young scholar working on USAID projects in Uganda in the 1960s, starting with the Teachers for East Africa Project (TEA) which enabled me to teach history and geography at Nabumali High School and work with seasoned British, Ugandan and American teachers (1962-1964). I was subsequently recruited to serve as Director of Guidance at Tororo Girls' School in Tororo, Uganda (1965-67). Although I studied African history and politics prior to assuming these positions, I had absolutely no formal teaching training and only one year of

experience as a graduate teaching assistant. The learning curve was steep, but the teaching load was light, colleagues were supportive and students were eager to learn. I spent a lot of time preparing for classes, listening, observing and absorbing pedagogical methods, institutional and local culture, and national politics. During these transformational years, I was struck by the impact of intersecting gender, education and development policies and practices on students, schools, communities and nations in East Africa. The lessons learned from these USAID projects continue to inform my research and teaching. Ironically, fifty years later, I am working with TEA Alumni on a project to help Tororo Girls' School meet Uganda's mandatory "science for all" policy.

I find applied policy research quite challenging because national policies are constantly changing and intersecting and bureaucratic hurdles and roadblocks frustrate and impede progress. However, frequent successful outcomes encourage me to stay in the game. In the past three decades I have worked with a number of NCOBPS members on applied research projects. They generally find the field interesting and rewarding and feel that they are well compensated for their efforts. I would encourage young scholars to explore the global marketplace of intersectional policies and practices - where they can contribute to the academic knowledge base and at the same time help improve the conditions of underserved populations.

### *Influences*

Jewel Limar Prestage has been the strongest influence on my academic career. Since my undergraduate years at Southern University, she has inspired and nurtured my interest in women and politics and supported my focus on gender, education and development policies and practices. She and Patricia McFadden, Patricia Hill Collins, Bonnie Thornton Dill, among others, inform my research as they continue to expand the boundaries of intersectionality to global policies and theoretical resources that

address many of the challenges facing Africans and African Americans.

### *Readership*

Policy-makers and international development administrators are the primary readers of applied research findings, however, university scholars, women's organizations, Pan-African intellectuals, neo-colonial practitioners and gender, education and development consultants, many of whom are political scientists, are secondary readers.

### *Disciplinary Categories*

I believe that applied intersectional policy research can be slotted across multiple disciplines and sub-disciplines, including development studies, global studies, women and gender studies, politics and education, public policy, African politics, comparative politics and Pan-African studies.

### *Upcoming Research*

I am currently working on a project that examines the relationship between educational and cultural exchange programs and US foreign policy. The research grows out of my service on the J.W. Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, which supervises Fulbright Programs in 155 countries. I am particularly concerned about the structural, regional and procedural inequalities in the Fulbright Program, but given the status of the Fulbright brand, deconstruction and change will not be easy. However, national and global demographics, communications technology, globalization and new political realities demand that we rethink, re-imagine and retool the Fulbright Program so that it serves the nation well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.