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The bureaucratisation of gender mainstreaming and the role of political will: a case study of the department of public service and administration in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Revised topic: The Bureaucratisation of Gender Mainstreaming and the Role of Political Will. A case study of State capacity to mainstream gender.

This study is situated in the field of Gender Studies. The study investigates the South African State's (in) ability to effectively mainstream gender as a strategy for gender equality. Despite having ratified several pieces of local, regional and international legislation, the gender agenda seems to be elusive when assessing the implementation of policy for gender equality. The major theoretical question being addressed is "What are the factors that enable and/or constrain the implementation of gender equality in countries that have formally committed to this goal?"

The Department of Public Service and Administration has been selected as the case study for this research, as this Ministry is allocated the responsibility for the management of policy in State departments in South Africa. Despite the official support expressed by the State in ratifying major legislation for example, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Dunker (2005) believes that the "gender wave has passed". The study builds on the work of authors such as Hassim, Moser, Cornwall, Kabeer, Gouws and Rao *et al*. However, this larger body of research does not drill down into the barriers the State faces, but rather generalises findings in this area.

This study offers unique insight into the barriers faced in the State's implementation of gender equality legislation. This is done by assessing the role of political will, resourcing and constructing an enabling environment as major influences for the success of Gender Mainstreaming within the South African State. The study analyses the bureaucratisation of gender mainstreaming at the Department of Public Service and Administration and reveals how this allows for the disruption of initiatives and masks the failings of the driver for gender equality, namely political will. The study reflects on political will from outside as well as from within the Department. Through the case study, the powerful role of political will in the success of gender mainstreaming for gender equality is demonstrated.