

Women, Economic Development,
and Higher Education

Diane E. Eynon

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Tools in the Reconstruction and Transformation
of Post-Apartheid South Africa

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Lorretto Higgins

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In September 2009, I traveled to South Africa for the second time in just two months. What brought me to the country was my interest and desire to learn more about how the government had been constructing a new post-apartheid South Africa and the tools it was using to build a nation based on equality, justice, and opportunity. In particular, I wanted to learn how women were contributing to and potentially benefiting from such efforts.

My interests focused on economic development and growth, higher education, and gender-equality policies. My decision to concentrate specifically on those areas was shaped by my continuing work in emerging economies and countries, as well as by my desire to understand how certain political, economic, and educational policies influence, create, and support women's opportunities.

I also wanted to know if those policies had accomplished what they had been meant to do. Did they contribute to and advance the transformation of South Africa? Policies are, of course, formulated, negotiated, and implemented with specific intentions, yet it is often unclear how well they will meet their stated objectives—let alone what unintended consequence they might have.

In my research for this book, I gathered material through archival data sources; government statistics, reports, and policies; and newspaper, magazine, and journal articles from a variety of institutions and organizations. During my doctoral studies at the University of Pennsylvania, I also conducted interviews with leading government officials who served in executive positions in the South African Department of Education, the

Council on Higher Education, and Ministry of Education. In addition, I interviewed professors at the University of Cape Town, University of Johannesburg, University of Pretoria, University of Western Cape, and Witwatersrand University, as well as the then deputy vice chancellor of the University of Cape Town. To gain external perspective on the South African higher education system, I also spoke with the executives at the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development and the South Africa Qualifications Authority, and an African scholar from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

I selected those individuals based on their deep knowledge, understanding, and experience in economic growth and development, higher education, and gender issues in South Africa. They reflect multiple perspectives, both as a group and individually. They include people who have been in the nation's higher education system during and after apartheid; educators and administrators who have experienced first-hand the changes in higher education in a post-apartheid South Africa; activists who view the economic growth and development policies of the government through a political, social, and gender lens; outside experts in academe and international development organization; and citizens of South Africa.

This book examines the current relationships and connections between three key areas—economic development, higher education, and women—and seeks to understand how they have contributed to the reconstruction and transformation of South Africa. It also identifies the ways that advances in areas such as women's rights, poverty alleviation, and access to education have been stymied—fallen victim to corruption or social prejudices, or simply overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems.

Much has been written about the topics of politics, the economy, education, and women in South Africa, but this book offers a new and comprehensive understanding of how they interrelate. It recognizes the tension in South Africa between serving the global economy and increasing equality through social justice interventions. Perhaps most important, instead of framing the major issues confronting the country in racial terms, as other books and studies have, it examines them through the lens of gender. And, as part of that, it brings to light the importance of a higher education degree for women if they are to have a voice and place in South Africa's future.

The writing of this book has been a journey. It has taken time, patience, and effort, and not just on my part, to complete. Many thanks to Marybeth Gasman for her support from the very beginning, when she

gave me the space and confidence as her doctoral advisee to pursue the research, all the way through to her encouragement to write and publish this book. I also owe much to Sarah Hardesty Bray for her careful and thorough editing, which has improved the text. To my friends and colleagues at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, thank you for all your support and encouragement. Thanks, as well, to Ruthann and George Riggs, my wonderful and loving grandparents, who always encouraged and supported me, even when I drew outside of the lines. Finally, once again I must thank Lorretto Higgins, for her patience, care, and love throughout the process.

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