

PROGRAM DATE: 2014-05-05

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: PROFESSOR IRMA ELOFF – DEAN FACULTY OF EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA – GENDER EQUALITY IN UNIVERSITIES

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA	Hello, I'm Dr. Amaleya Goneos-Malka, welcome to 'Womanity – Women in Unity'. The show that celebrates prominent and ordinary African Women's milestone achievements in their struggles for liberation, self-emancipation, human rights, democracy, racism, socio-economic class division and gender based violence.
DR. MALKA	Today's discussion is on Gender Equality in Universities and with us in studio is Professor Irma Eloff the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. Now Prof Eloff is the seventh Dean and the first woman to hold this position; she is an NRF rated researcher, a registered psychologist and has received several awards for her research in education and educational psychology. In 2012 she was chosen amongst the top three most influential women in business and government in South Africa in the education category. She is the past president of the Education Association of South Africa; she is an ASSAF Member and she was the first Education Academic to win the Exceptional Young Research Award of the University of Pretoria. Prof Eloff has published more than 55 academic articles and book chapters and during her term as Dean education at the University of Pretoria has achieved a ranking in the top 150 of the World, on the World QS World University rankings and she is a mother to two sons and she has been married for 24 years.
DR. MALKA	Welcome to the show!
PROF ELOFF	Thank you very much Dr. Malka, thank you or inviting me.
DR. MALKA	Please tell us more about the Faculty of Education.
PROF ELOFF	Well the Faculty of Education is located on the Groenkloof Campus of the University of Pretoria, as you know the University of Pretoria is a multi-campus university. We have approximately 4,500 students in the faculty, about 1,000 of them are post graduate students, mainly doctoral and masters degree students, and then we have an additional 16,000 students in distance education they are mostly teachers who are teaching, they are in the profession and they want to upgrade their qualifications, ja.
DR. MALKA	Those are incredible numbers.
PROF ELOFF	Yes it is. About ten years ago, and now specifically with the distance education, about ten years ago we decided that we really want to impact on the education sector by increasing opportunities for teachers who may not have had access to tertiary education when they were young and as such we then developed the bouquet of programmes for distance education and where we initially thought that there would only be a few hundred students enrolling for it the numbers just boomed because of the quality, we really invested in the quality of the learning materials and for some reason our very best lecturers were attracted to those courses so there was a very beautiful productive synergy and the student numbers just grew through the roof.
DR. MALKA	And are you catering for all types of educational disciplines?
PROF ELOFF	No, we are very selective, at the moment the focus is on teachers who are working in education management and then also teachers who are working in special needs.

DR. MALKA	And given that this is a gender based programme and your faculty, what I've noticed has got one of the highest ratios of women to men, it's approximately 70% to 30%, why is it that you think more women are studying education than men?
PROF ELOFF	Well this is a worldwide phenomenon with education being a fairly female profession all over the world, not just in South Africa, the reasons for that is often attributed to the pay that is linked to the teacher's salary and there may also be other reasons for that, however, at the Faculty at Pretoria in the last two to three years I've seen a slow trend emerging with more men enrolling for teacher programmes, which is of course for us positive because we would want to see a more balanced profile there.
DR. MALKA	And is there a particular form of education that they're enrolling for so is it sort of the science, the technology.....
PROF ELOFF	No....
DR. MALKAstreams or is it humanities and a mix?
PROF ELOFF	It's across the board, its natural sciences, economics and management sciences, the general subjects, so it's across the board.
DR. MALKA	I wanted to go back to a point you mentioned that possibly it was about pay, that women were attracted to the positions and in my experience education has generally been an underpaid profession.
PROF ELOFF	Yes, ja. With pay I meant that it may be the reason why the men don't choose it as a career or as a course to enrol in. Yes, it's been a topic of conversation again across the world and it remains a point of contention with many teachers having to supplement their income just to take care of their families so yes but then also the....to sustain it budget wise as a government is very difficult with the numbers of teachers that you have to sustain.
DR. MALKA	So you're working across government as well as private sector?
PROF ELOFF	Yes, ja, we're delivering teachers who can cater to all the needs of South African schools and as we all know there is a whole range of South African schools from highly functional schools competing with the best in the world to very low resourced schools who still need a lot of infrastructure development.
DR. MALKA	Well it's such an important role socially in society education and teachers and often they form a significant role model for the youth that are growing up because conceivably children spend a large majority of their day in the school environment versus in the home environment.
PROF ELOFF	Yes, exactly. One of the things that we've done on the Groenkloof Campus is three/four years ago we invested in infrastructure development on campus and we created on the one side a high technology classroom with state of the art equipment etc., etc., and on the other side we created an outdoor facility, we teach our students how to be a teacher where there's no plug, there's no blackboard, it's just you in front of a class.
DR. MALKA	It's very creative.
PROF ELOFF	Yes, so we give them the whole range of experiences.
DR. MALKA	That's very interesting and it's just pushed through from an innovation point of view and creativity when you have fewer tools to use that you still have to inspire and educate and send across the messages that you're trying to reach out to the youth. One of the other areas that you mentioned was that in terms of your distance learning that I think you said there's approximately 16,000 distance educators that you are teaching, what are some of the reasons behind this?

PROF ELOFF	It is mostly in, distance education, it is students who are older, the age profile is between 40 and 55 years of age so it is often in the distance programmes, it's teachers who did not have the opportunity to go to university when they were young, so that's the preference, our residential students though they are younger, they've recently matriculated so there's a little bit of a difference between the profile of our distance education students and the residential students.
DR. MALKA	And with the distance education students that you mentioned, are they looking at being able to attain the formal degree that they were possibly denied in the past?
PROF ELOFF	Yes, we've created pathways initially where they could complete like a certificate course, they move onto an honours programme and some of them have even gone all the way to masters degree and doctoral studies, not all of them of course because it's just too huge in numbers but some of them have, they've grabbed the opportunity and took they that path.
DR. MALKA	So doing further education, and I also consider, I studied at UNISA for many years utilising the distance learning approach, you've got several challenges, you are working in your career, you are catering to your family and it provides more accessible options for people who were juggling that balance, do you also find that that's part of the attraction for distance learning?
PROF ELOFF	Yes I do think it's part of the attraction, also I think the flexibility that a distance mode gives you because our students can choose when they want to write exams, they have several opportunities throughout the year, they can take only some of their subjects so if they have a difficult year or say for instance a child entering school or their personal circumstances are such that they can't do all their subjects in that year then they can spread it out over a longer period and I think that kind of flexibility is attractive for students.
DR. MALKA	It provides far more options.
PROF ELOFF	Yes it does.
DR. MALKA	And how are you finding the role of technology?
PROF ELOFF	For these students we've had some very interesting projects around using mobile technology, cell phone technology, where some of it has been innovative and cutting edge in the world where some of our staff presented conferences where they share this where we've learned that so many of our students, all of them have cell phones but only about 15% of those students have access to internet so it makes sense for us to rely more on cell phone technology to support them and there's been wonderful stories where we send out mini tutorials or we send out reminders about assignments that's due and we've seen a definite positive correlation between the through put rate and the academic success of our students with the use of mobile technology.
DR. MALKA	That's great how technology is really an enabler in so many aspects of society.
AD BREAK	
DR. MALKA	We are talking to Prof Irma Eloff who is the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, for those of you who have just tuned in, you are listening to 'Womanity – Women in Unity' on Channel Africa, the voice of the African Renaissance, on frequency 9625 KHz on the 31 meter band. We would love to receive your comments on facebook or Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	We have just been discussing the importance of educating educators and demonstrated the responsibility that teachers have shown to their profession by up-skilling themselves through further education even if it means distance learning. Another important point to reflect on is that the majority of educators globally are women.

DR. MALKA	Now picking up with our discussion with Prof Eloff, there is a great quote by Greg Mortenson, he says “educate a boy and you educate an individual, educate a girl and you educate a community” so judging by the number of women versus men that are enrolled in education at the University of Pretoria, I would assume and we’ve already spoken about this, that the majority of educators in South Africa are more likely to be women, so given this fact how do you think it will help reduce inequality gaps in South African society?
PROF ELOFF	The recent research findings have been very heartening because like you rightly say the investment in girls education have positive benefits across the board, from health indicators through even economic indicators, starting with the family you know the studies that we’ve seen with the likelihood of a child surviving with a mother being educated, it just increases dramatically when a mother gains access to education and becomes ...
DR. MALKA	And those are elaborated on quite heavily with the millennium development goals with their achievements.
PROF ELOFF	Exactly yes, so that kind of investment we know will yield positive results and certainly we should continue on this path.
DR. MALKA	And in terms of the actual Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, what role do you think it plays with respect to gender equality you know, considering that you are educating the educators who in turn when they graduate are going on to educate successive generations in society?
PROF ELOFF	We tend to lead...we try to lead by example rather than to preach and to say how things should be. If you look at the lecturers in academics in the Faculty of Education they are role models for the students and then the students in turn go out to schools and they become role models for future generations of children so what we try to do is we try to do what we should be preaching so our actions and what we live become our message.
DR.MALKA	It’s a very positive way of conducting education and....
PROF ELOFFwe hope so....
DR. MALKA	...and pushing through a strong sentiment into society and now I’d like to turn more towards you and ask you more of a personal question. You are the first Dean within the Faculty of Education, you have already broken glass ceilings which paves the way for future women coming into other positions similar to yours or being able to carve a path in their own careers to attain high levels such as yourself, so I’d love it if you can please walk us through some of the steps in terms of your career journey and also paying particular attention to some of the issues that you’ve faced from a gender point of view and how you’ve overcome them?
PROF ELOFF	Okay perhaps to start off with I was raised by a single mom so it never occurred to me that the world should be anything else. I was at university when I started to realise that perhaps there are places where women aren’t in charge.....so when I started to study I was always interested in education, in languages, in psychology and it took me to the Faculty of Education for my, what we then called the Higher Education Diploma and I think there was an inadvertent almost..in Afrikaans they use the...it’s circumstances coming together in a very interesting way, when I became Head of Department of Educational Psychology I was still very young and it almost wouldn’t have happened but then circumstances led to that being happened. I also think the Dean preceding me was the first black dean at the University of Pretoria’s Faculty of Education and he consistently said that the next dean will be a woman so in a sense he created the
DR. MALKA	It’s almost like pre-empting in expectation...
PROF ELOFF	...yes....

DR. MALKA	...of making you know looking at diversity within the faculty.
PROF ELOFF	...exactly, yes, so when I did become dean it wasn't really a talking point the fact that I was a woman it was just oh she's the next dean and there we go. I think the University of Pretoria has done extremely well in terms of pushing those kinds of agendas and by breaking through glass ceilings. If you look at the studies on vice chancellors across the world for instance that can be where vice chancellors are still very much under-represented and we've done ground breaking work there as well.
DR. MALKA	Now if I'm not mistaken, statistics may be a little off, but in South Africa I think of the nine leading institutions two of them are pro vice...two of the institutions have female pro vice chancellors of which University of Pretoria is one of them.
PROF ELOFF	Yes, ja, so I think I've been fortunate to work at an institution where there's a lot of support and a lot of good work being done for a really long time already, not that we haven't...not that we don't have challenges ahead of us, of course we do we always do but I think we've been fortunate.
DR. MALKA	I think it's important to understand that we've come from....where we've come from, we've addressed those issues, and yes you're right there always will be new challenges and it's just a matter of being able to identify new solutions to take...to address those points. And within challenges at the faculty from a woman's point of view and gender and I'm looking at it more from a student's perspective, what do you..what do you think some of those still are?
PROF ELOFF	I think the education sector at the moment is a very dynamic sector, it has a lot challenges so I think that then translates inadvertently to challenges that's gendered as well. There's a lot of pressure, there's a lot of dysfunction that needs to be addressed and that is being addressed but that responsibility often comes down on the teachers and they may be at a place where they have the need...or in a life phase where they have the need for more flexibility or they may even be put in positions of responsibility that may be a little bit early in their career so I think there's a lot of the circumstances of the education sector that then manifests in challenges for women.
DR. MALKA	And within the education sector what are our sort of ratios in the school environment, is there a deficit from a teaching point of view, do we need more teachers because working in a situation where your resources are very stretched and particularly from a human resource point of view which is really what educators are about and educating their time, when you're working across 20/30/50 children in a class it could be very stressful.
PROF ELOFF	Yes....yes it's...the education sector is very challenging like I've just said.
DR. MALKA	What challenges do you think that women face in the faculty and how does the department address these issues, so for instance are you...have you got any programmes that prepare young educators for the challenges of gender issues post university, post graduation, when they're actually in the workplace?
PROF ELOFF	I think there are several challenges. There's this concept called stereotype susceptibility where you know there's been studies that shows that when girls are reminded of their gender just before taking a mathematics test then they actually perform worse and this has been empirically tested so what we're trying to do at the univ....or at the faculty is to break those stereotypes and to break those preconceived ideas about girls performance in maths and science for instance and some of our strongest students are in those fields, they win the awards, they are at graduation ceremonies standing there in front of everyone with their gowns, so I think the only way to address those stereotypical thinking is to create actual evidence that shows the contrary. There are also other...other barriers in that women don't necessarily easily talk about their own achievements and I think with

	girls being humble often, not talking about what they are good at, some of the literature in gender studies have shown that there's a trade off between likability and girls talking about their achievements, they have to decide do they talk about their achievements or do they still want to be liked and I think in the faculty that sometimes plays out.
DR. MALKA	So it's about acceptance in society and for women having to choose between succeeding versus what is socially accepted within their environment.
PROF ELOFF	And I think we're fortunate in the faculty that there are many role models of academics, researchers, teachers who show that they can be high achievers but then still be liked by the way that they conduct themselves.
DR. MALKA	And being....so it seems that from a gender point of view that men have been judged by different criteria to what women have been judged by, that if a man is perceived as being the boss, he is the boss and people obey, but from a woman's point of view sometimes if she is putting through as a boss she may be perceived as bossy so there's those cultural connotations with the way in which women conduct themselves as with the way in which men conduct themselves, but we have a set of judging criteria which is different across genders.
PROF ELOFF	And we're not even aware of it sometimes ourselves, we self impose it sometimes we are guilty of it, ja...in the things that we say ourselves.
DR. MALKA	Yes that's an interesting point and I'm not sure how we should address that from a society level....
PROF ELOFF	Me neither....
DR. MALKA	...but I think that from an education point of view that that's possibly maybe something which comes into the curriculum of building girls to be more self-assertive about what their achievements are and what they're doing and encouraging to take them forwards.
PROF ELOFF	Something that I heard recently was a female executive who in her team she realised that the women in the team they don't speak about their own achievements but the men comfortably do so but then she asked the women to be talking about the achievements of the other women and they were very comfortable to do that, which I think was a brilliant strategy, so now in the report back sessions the woman is asked to say what their friends and their colleagues are doing rather than to put them on the spot where they have to talk about their own achievements, so that's a creative way I think of solving challenges like that.
DR. MALKA	And looking at the psychology aspects behind women's behaviour which I'm sure taps into all of the work that you're doing and your interests.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	You are listening to 'Womanity –Women in Unity' on Channel Africa, the voice of the African Renaissance, on frequency 9626 KHz, on the 31 meter band. We're talking to Professor Irma Eloff who is the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. We would love to receive your comments on Facebook Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	Africa is within the African continent obviously and we have our academic systems and its achievements can stand as a role model for many countries in Africa, do you have any collaborations or exchange programmes that you have embarked on and are working with with other countries on the continent?
PROF ELOFF	Last year I established the African Deans of Education Forum in Nairobi in Kenya, we had a teacher education conference there and there was more than 25 deans from different countries across Africa....
DR. MALKA	...and which countries have been participating?
PROF ELOFF	...there were from Kenya and from Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Egypt, it was from all over Africa so it was very representative, Angloand Franco.....the whole system which was very interesting and then we

	established the forum there and then in June/July this year we will be meeting up again in Pretoria here to finalise our agenda of moving the forum forward, it's I think a very interesting, powerful network of deans of education who are interested in teacher mobility, quality teacher education and the research that we need to do in the education sector.
DR. MALKA	And with the mobility options will that allow for cross-pollination of people from different countries to teach in other countries?
PROF ELOFF	Yes. It's a matter of grave concern to all the deans who were present is for teachers to be...have high mobility, to move between countries, especially to address someskills areas in the education sector in different countries so we can all have the benefit of that shared expertise.
DR. MALKA	That's fantastic, a really important initiative, so I would imagine there would be then annual conferences that would be taking place....
PROF ELOFF	That's the vision, yes.
DR. MALKA	...and probably going from different countries to different countries...
PROF ELOFF	Yes, ja.
DR. MALKA	Another question I have, again looking at gender equity is gender equity is increasingly a global focus, recently in South Africa we have put out the Women Empowerment and Gender Equity Bill which is currently in the National Assembly and it's principle aim is about promoting and to achieve equality for women across the board, if you could just share some of your perspectives in how, when we have legislation such as this that is gender based, how it can help address gender gaps in society?
PROF ELOFF	I think in South Africa we've done really well in progressing and pushing these agenda's and sometimes I'm startled if I am confronted with data from other countries to see how far we have come because I think in many instances we are an example to others and it starts right at the top to ensure that there's representivity but then also for a policy like that to be visible then it's important because there's a trickle-down effect so that it heightens awareness amongst the general population about these issues.
DR. MALKA	And it also has to have I think mainstreaming issues from a gender point of view because you can have legislation which is geared around helping and promoting women but at the same time we also need to address the men, we can't have a neglect of gender for one versus the other and I think that there's a bit of a contradiction or almost a paradox when we look at the levels of how educated women are in South African society and according to the Council for Higher Education the ratio of female enrolments versus male enrolments is 58% versus 42% so women are incredibly educated as a segment of the population but yet when they come into the workplace and the workforce there's some shocking statistics done by the Business Women's Association South Africa where they said that according to their data women represented on the JSE as CEO's account for less than 4.4%, which is exceptionally low, that 5.3% of chairpersons, 15.8% of total director positions and in general on executive management women are at only 22%.
PROF ELOFF	I recently read something that aligns with that saying that even though women have made huge strides in the workplace that we should also be looking at the strides that's made at home and that perhaps one of the underlying reasons why there's such under-representivity in the statistics that you've just shared with us is that women literally, because of the lack of progress at home in terms of task sharing, in terms of sharing responsibilities and raising children, just generally around the house, that women end up having two full time jobs at home and then at work as well and that that may be the reason why there's such lack of progress and perhaps we should advance by looking at the situation at home and what's

	the responsibilities that women are shouldering there and perhaps to talk more about equality there, not only in the workplace.
DR. MALKA	I think many women would attest to what you've just said. You're absolutely right in achieving that balance because for a high powered businessman he can go off do his work, come home and the whole home environment is taken care of but for a woman, depending on the relationship that she has with her spouse, if she's attending to all of the home functionality she's compromising herself in her business space because she certainly won't compromise her home and her children, in general your home and your children are your number one priority.
PROF ELOFF	And often with successful women you would see a supportive partner on the other side sharing responsibilities, sharing raising children and many studies have showed how good that is, good for the wellbeing of children, good for financial security of a household and for longevity so there's been many studies that show that if you have that kind of sharing in the home it's good for everyone, it's not just good for the woman to be promoted at work, but it's good for the children as well as the whole family.
DR. MALKA	Role modelling....
PROF ELOFF	...exactly...
DR.MALKA	...and by having two successful spouses you're bringing in a higher income which in turn can pay for some of those support structures.
PROF ELOFF	Exactly. There's also been some studies that show it's more stable marriages when there's more task sharing.
DR. MALKA	Very interesting.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	You are listening to 'Womanity –Women in Unity' on Channel Africa, the voice of the African Renaissance, on frequency 9626 KHz, on the 31 meter band. We're talking to Professor Irma Eloff who is the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. We would love to receive your comments on Facebook or Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	My last question, really more of a statement is, if you could please share a few words of inspiration that you'd like to pass on to other women across the continent who are listening to the show?
PROF ELOFF	I think we often think of work life balance as if it is diametrically opposed concepts and I think it's really helpful to think of it as integrated, it is your life with work being a part of it, it need not be a trade off between the two, it is your life and I think to see it as one and to integrate it as well would serve us all. We're very fortunate we live in good times for women but there's still a lot of work to do.
DR. MALKA	The integrated philosophy I think is something which is really important and something that would be good for more people to embrace but given the realities of what actually happens in the workspace, if you think of our working hours they're designed from a nine to five or an eight to four, being able to have that flexibility is a challenge for most careers.
PROF ELOFF	And until we have women in those positions to change those inflexible things we will be going on as we are now and that's not good, we need flexibility and it's a benefit to everyone, to the whole workforce, that kind of flexibility will infiltrate decision making on all levels in a company or in a university and I think that's good.
DR. MALKA	Thank you Prof Eloff, appreciate your time today.
	PROGRAMME END