Towards an Improvement of Women's Representation in Primary Schools Leadership Positions in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya

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Abstract

In both developing and developed countries, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making and leadership in several areas. The consequence of this gender gap is that women do not participate fully in decisions that shape their lives and their communities and countries are not capitalizing on the full potential of one half of their societies. This paper examines a number of factors needed in improving female teachers' participation in leadership positions based on a study conducted in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya. The study was a descriptive survey that used both quantitative and qualitative techniques. It involved a sample of 105 respondents where 2 Municipal Education Officials (TAC tutors), 8 head teachers, 80 teachers and 15 committee members were purposely selected from 15 randomly selected public primary schools in the Municipality. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedule and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentage and Chi-square (X^2) were employed in the analysis. The findings indicated that there were important issues which could be used to improve female teacher participation to headship positions in order to reduce inequalities. Some of these factors included strengthening mentor system, eliminating gender stereo type and ensuring that there was frequent training on leadership skills. It was thus recommended that policy options be formulated to mitigate the marginalization of women from the family level to national level. The study is significant both to scholars as well as policy-makers in the government, among other agents, as it raises issues on the need to create gender awareness and promote equality in leadership positions.

Keywords: Improvement, Women Representation, Secondary Schools, Leadership Positions, Eldoret Municipality, Kenya

Introduction

Globally, women's access to top leadership positions is still severely restricted though they match or exceed their male counterparts in terms of formal qualification and technical know-how. Indeed, it is in the world of corporate business that the glass ceiling has proved most impenetrable with a mere 2-3 percent of top jobs in large corporations held by women (International Labour Organisation, 1998). Traditionally, women have been expected to perform household duties relating to child rearing and other domestic functions. Men on the other hand have been expected to leave the home to work with the primary responsibility of supporting the family economically and protecting its members. This traditional arrangement has been brought into question by the entrance of women often as primary breadwinners in significant numbers into mainstream society in recent decades (Merger, 1999). Despite the changed work roles of women, the gender breakdown of traditional roles has changed radically. Although majority of adult women are in the labour force, they continue to do the bulk of child care and household task. A comparative study of Sweden and the United States found that in both countries men did between twenty and thirty percent housework (Wright *et al.*, 1992). Bianchi and Spain (1996) assert that majority of Americans believe that women today should work even if they are raising families and increase the mainstream labour force as full or part time workers, unlike in the past generation.

The expectation of most women is no longer that they stay at home attending to domestic chores. The rate of labour force participation is not the same in all societies of modern world. In less developed societies and in societies where religion dictates most societal norms (particularly Muslim countries), there is less female participation than in the western industrialized countries. However, in recent decades, economic globalization has drawn many women in the underdeveloped world into the unskilled labour force (Peter & Runyan, 1993). In an attempt to expand their participation leadership, women have traditionally engaged in unpaid or non-market workday like housework, childrearing and their performance is outstanding. A United Nations report has observed that worldwide 66 percent of women's work is unpaid as compared to 34 percent of men's work (United Nations, 1996). Another consistent occupational pattern among societies is that of traditional female roles which are accorded less prestige than those of men. However, the kind of work done by women is considered less valuable which should have been rewarded accordingly (England, 1982).

It is generally the case that the more women in an occupation the less both female and male workers earn (Reskin & Padavic, 1994). Employment and national accounts data do not capture non-market activities where women pre-dominate and therefore fail to demonstrate the full contribution of women to the household economy and the extent of female work burden. Women in Kenya are "time-poor" because of their dual role in the household economy and the Labour market. On average women work longer hours (12.9 hours) compared to those of men (8.2 hours), yet women earn less because more of these hours are not remunerated (Saito & Spurling, 1994). Women constitute 60.8 percent of unpaid family workers. Some of them who are found in the rural areas of Kenya are burdened with household tasks such as collecting firewood and pounding grains. Only 30 percent of household in Kenya have access to piped water and fetching water can account for up to 40 percent of a woman's day, taking from 3 to 5.25 hours (Were & Kiringai, 2003).

Child care is also an important source of time burden for women in Kenya. Their labour time and flexibility are therefore constrained than men's, hence disproportionate cost borne by women in terms of reproductive work in the household economy limits the time that they spend on economic activities and, further, they may have less time to devote to developing their businesses (Blackden & Hughes, 1993). The 2006 World Bank country's social analysis argues that women's burden in the economic, domestic and collective spheres have only intensified bringing about a destabilizing effect on household leading to increased tension and violence (World Bank, 2006). Economic, educational and cultural factors influence decision-making patterns among the households. The patriarchal system in many African traditions tends to have a profound influence on households' decision-making. The consultations that take place within the household are shrouded by male dominance, which does not provide the female partners with a forum conducive for negotiation. Even in cases where the males have assisted their female counterparts to start a family business, the male spouses are still obliged to meet major capital expenditure for households. The status of the household head also has an influence on decision-making (Mwangi, 2002). Despite the progress made so far in both developing and developed countries, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making and leadership in several areas.

The consequence of this gender gap is that women do not participate fully in decisions that shape their lives and their communities and countries are not capitalizing on the full potential of one half of their societies (Gentry, 1996). However, in Eldoret Municipality the pattern of headship positions among female teachers reveals under-representation of women as they account for a small percentage of heads of institutions. There are 41 public primary schools in the Municipality and the numbers of female head teachers are 10 whereas their male counterparts are 31. This is a huge disparity of gender and equality despite the fact that female teachers in the municipality are 660 comprising 83% of the entire teaching workforce while the male comprise 17% with their total of 139 (MEO'S office, 2010). Eldoret Municipality like other municipalities in Kenya comprises more female teaching workforce but low participation into top headship positions in schools due to a problem that starts at an early stage in life where girls were discriminated against and the trend of inequality continues till maturity where more men are in leadership as compared to women hence there was need to study this problem in order to find out factors contributing to under representation of female teachers to headship and to find out ways that could be done in order to improve equal participation in leadership positions.

Women and Development

According to Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD, 2001), the mainstream development thinking today shows that the contribution of women to economic growth and social progress is no longer an issue of controversy. Several studies have established the level of involvement of women in wealth creation in almost all countries. Some studies have attempted to quantify the proportion of wealth generated by women in some countries. The contribution of women in development, however, has not been matched by re-distribution of the wealth that they help to generate. The process has rather worsened the conditions of women around the globe especially in developing countries. This is manifested in the male domination in respect of wealth management in most African societies.

The importance of women's access to and control over resources is an integral part of the AAWORD's recently formulated policy paper on women in development. Gender inequality takes its toll on economic and social development everywhere. In 1995, the human development report reminded us that although every country has made progress in development, women's capabilities is still unequal in the world. In no society today do women enjoy the same opportunities as men. This unequal status leaves considerable disparities between how much women contribute to human development and how little they share in its benefits (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 1995).

Young (1988) argues that involving women at all of development thinking, planning and implementation will make a world of difference not merely to women but to the capacity of society to envisage and carry out planned social change which will permit human kind to live in harmony with nature and itself. To bring women to centre stage role will require profound changes in the way that societies conceive of relation between the genders and dismantle of centuries old structures of thought and practice.

Canada International Development Agency (CIDA, 1998) asserts that there is need for full participation of women as equal partners in sustainable development of their societies. The policy has two related elements; the integration of gender equality consideration in all development initiative and involvement of women as equal and active partners in development work. According to United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA, 1992), women are at its very centre of which the interaction creates a powerful synergy that can enhance or retard the achievement of a more balanced style of development.

UNFPA (ibid.) asserts that the role and the status of women affect each point of the triangle and are in turn affected by them. Women influence the environment through their management of families, population through reproductive behaviour, development through economic and political roles in family and society. Statistically, the distribution of women in the labour force tends to reflect the level of development of a country. However, the overall rate of participation can vary simply because of difference in statistical definition and that in a developing country it may show female activity rates increase or decrease over time without any real difference in the work performed by women being involved. Cultural factors may be taken into account to explain differential sex distribution in the economy especially the sex labelling of jobs and women's attitude toward work to assess how they perform their task (Boserup, 1970).

UNESCO'S recent Social Science research has heightened awareness of women's contribution to the processes of social and economic development. Studies such as *Women and the Informal Sector* (UNESCO, 1992) and *Women in Developing Economies* (UNESCO, 1993) have shed light of the magnitude of this contribution and, regrettably, on its lack of adequate recognition. Similarly, further research has focused on women in fields such as public policy making (UNESCO, 1990), the media and their role in transitional economies thus demonstrating that the reality of their presence fully justifies their involvement in decision-making. Mention must be made of the special contribution made by highly qualified women to the social development process - which implies progress towards higher living standards, .greater equality of opportunity and basic human rights for all peoples and nations.
These have been targeted as the expected outcomes of the Social Development Summit (Copenhagen, 1995) and have equal relevance for the goals of 4th World Conference on Women. Clearly, equality, development and peace can never be realized while grave social and economic imbalances pertain. A country's social and economic progress as well as its ability to adapt to a changing environment depends largely on the quality of its human resources whose education and training must be sound yet flexible and thus able to adapt to changing conditions (UNESCO, 1993).

The prevalence of discriminatory practices constitutes a persistent gap between the formal equality of men and women as recognized by national, regional and international legal frameworks, and the substantive equality that they should enjoy.

> No country can raise the standard of living and improve the well-being of its people without the participation of half its population. Experience in other countries have shown over and over again that women are important actors in development - to hold them back is to hold back the potential for economic growth (World Bank, 2004).

There are several reasons for this link. Women can play an instrumental role in lifting their families out of poverty through labour force participation. Women are also more likely to invest their earnings in their children, and to assume critical, life sustaining responsibilities. Thus, women's empowerment is important for determining a country's economic success and sustainability. The extent to which women and girls benefit from development policies and programmes has a major impact on a country's overall development success and growth prospects (World Bank, 2004; Hafkin & Taggart, 2001; Liu & Wilson, 2001).

Moreover, women's participation in the workforce and the associated economic benefits that result from this participation engender nation building and development. In using the term "development", we borrow from the work of Sen (1999), in which he argues that development is a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. This differs from theories of economic development, such as growth in gross national product (GNP), technological advances, and rise in personal incomes or social modernization. While GNP and personal income provide means to expand freedoms, Sen expands this notion by including determinants of freedoms, such as health care, education, political and civil rights. Development requires the eradication of sources of oppression, such as gender and racial discrimination, social and economic deprivation, neglect of public facilities, intolerance or over-activity of repressive states (Sen, 1999).

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in Eldoret Municipality using a limited, but justified, number of respondents. It is possible that the findings on the factors needed in improving female teachers' leadership i in secondary schools may not be generalisable to other places in Kenya owing to different regional challenges. Nevertheless, the study provides a framework through which scholars can conduct similar studies and recommend for appropriate solutions to the problems facing female teachers in Kenya.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Eldoret town. The town is a major centre for industrial, commercial and agricultural activities. It has a well established infrastructure and a good geographical climate liked by many (Republic of Kenya, Uasin Gishu Development Plan 1997-2001). It is cosmopolitan town and teachers who teach in the Municipality come from different communities and majority of them are female teachers who happen to be trained and posted there by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). The author employed descriptive survey design because the findings needed to be generalized over a large population. The study used both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

The target population of the study comprised Municipal education officials (TAC tutors), head teachers, teachers and committee members as stakeholders. The Municipality was chosen because female teachers are the majority of the teaching workforce yet they are under-represented in top headship positions. This study employed stratified sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling. The research population was grouped into strata's of officers, head teachers, deputies', senior teachers, assistant teachers and committee members. Since each member of the population had an equal and independent chance of being selected, simple random sampling technique was used to select the representative sample. Purposive sampling techniques was used as the author targeted a group of people believed to be reliable and would provide information with respect to the objectives of the study. The author, therefore, used a representative sample of 105 respondents of which 2 were Municipal Education Officials (TAC tutors), 8 were head teachers of which 4 respondents from each group of male and female head teachers, 80 teachers and 15 committee members from 15 public primary schools. The author used a different percent to calculate representation of head teacher in order to have equal representation of both male and female head teachers.

The study used questionnaire and interview schedule to collect information from the respondents. All completed questionnaire from the field were cleaned, coded and key-punched into a computer and analyzed. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics included means, percentage, frequencies, range and standard deviation. The Chi-square test (χ^2) was employed to determine the significant differences between the observed frequencies of responses from the respondents.

Results and Discussion

Factors needed in Improving Female Teacher Participation to Headship Positions

Table 1 presents frequencies and percentage of the responses as pertains to the factors needed in improving female teacher participation to headship positions. The respondents were asked to indicate whether or not affirmative action policies were to be monitored in order to improve equal participation to headship positions in schools. Out of the total respondents, 56(70%) supported the suggestion, 24(30%) refuted the statement. It was further revealed that out of 15 male respondents, 13(16.25%) supported this statement and only 2(2.5%) refuted it. Women are still under-represented in middle and senior management roles. The difficulties faced by women in breaking into what is still very much a male preserve that is 'the glass ceiling', an analogy to describe the subtly transparent barrier that prevent women from gaining access to the more senior roles in their organization (Cole, 2002).

Table 1: Factors needed in Improving Female Participation to Headship Positions

Statement	Sex	Yes		No		Total
		Freq	%	Freq	%	
Affirmative action to be monitored	M	13	16.3	2	2.5	15
	F	43	53.8	22	27.5	65
	T	56	70	24	30	80
Improve job sharing	M	8	10	7	8.8	15
	F	33	41.3	32	40	65
	T	41	51.3	39	48.8	80
Providing special programme	M	11	13.8	4	5	15
	F	29	36.3	36	45	65
	T	40	50	40	50	80
Strengthen mentor system	M	10	12.5	5	6.3	15
	F	34	42.5	31	38.8	65
	T	44	55	36	45	80
Develop network	M	5	6.3	10	12.5	15
	F	25	31.3	40	50	65
	T	30	37.5	50	62.5	80
Redefining staff roles	M	6	7.5	9	11.3	15
	F	31	38.8	34	42.5	65
	T	37	46.3	43	53.8	80
Eliminating negative stereotype	M	12	15	3	3.8	15
	F	45	56.3	20	25	65
	T	57	71.3	23	28.8	80
Reducing resistance	M	8	10	7	8.8	15
	F	34	42.5	31	38.8	65
	T	42	52.5	38	47.5	80
Frequent training	M	12	15	3	3.8	15
	F	48	60	17	21.3	65
	T	60	75	20	25	80

The results of this analysis further indicated that, of the sampled population, 41(51.25%) supported that improved job sharing can improve female participation while 39(48.75%) refuted the statement. The findings in the table also indicate that both male and female respondents agreed that providing special programme would improve female teacher participation and were at the same level at (50%).

Several studies have demonstrated that women and men are not treated equally at work even if they possess the same qualification and are hired to perform the same job. Women encounter barriers when they try to enter the most lucrative and prestigious specialties. "A glass ceiling" prevents them from reaching the top position (Reskin & Phipps, 1988). When asked whether or not developing network would improve female teacher participation to headship position, 30(37.5%) supported while 50(62.5%) refuted the statement. As indicated in the above table, when the respondents were asked to indicate whether or not redefining staff roles would improve female participation to headship positions, 37(46.25%) said yes while 43(53.75%) said no. When asked if eliminating negative stereotype would improve female teacher participation, 12(15%) of male, 45(56.25%) of female said yes while 23(28.75%) refuted the statement.

When asked to state whether or not reducing resistance to change would improve participation, it was noted that 42(52.5%) of the respondents supported while 38(47.5%) refuted the statement. According to Greene (1985), inequalities and exclusion are maintained by a firm belief in the stereo type accorded to gender roles in society but also by an unwillingness to accept change towards a more equitable position for men and women. The respondents were further asked to state whether or not frequent training would improve female participation and 60(75%) of them supported while 20(25%) refuted the statement. According to this analysis, most respondents supported that frequent training was necessary in order to improve female teacher participation to headship positions.

Furthermore, the study revealed that eliminating gender stereotype would help improve female participation. The TAC (tutors) and head teachers interviewed on their views on factors needed in order to improve female teacher participation, cited that the policy on promotion to be followed strictly and that vacant positions in schools to be advertised and appointment to be done on merit. They further suggested re-considering quota system, capacity building, encourage female teachers to vie for such positions, encourage mentor system, change the culture and creating gender awareness at all levels.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study findings revealed that although family and motherhood are the main cause of under-representation, motherhood is the kingpin that helps any country to grow economically and to have adequate manpower needed for the success of any nation thus policy makers to ensure equality in all circles and to reconsider flexibility of policies to suit both gender. The research findings indicated that there are important issues which could be used to improve female teacher participation to headship positions in order to reduce inequalities. Some of these factors included strengthening mentor system, eliminating gender stereo type and ensuring that there was frequent training on leadership skills.

From the findings, further affirmative action, strengthening of mentor system and training on leadership skills could help improve female teacher participation to headship positions in schools. As such, policy options should be formulated to mitigate the marginalization of women from the family level to national level.

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