STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING PARTICIPATION OF FEMALE TEACHERS IN MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract:
Worldwide, women representation in management and leadership positions is marginal. Despite immense academic advancement by women, few of them do advance to management positions. In Kenya, women make up a critical portion of human resource base. However, they are grossly underrepresented at leadership positions. This situation is reflected in school leadership positions as well, including headship of schools. Unless the gender gaps in management and leadership positions are addressed, the talent of high skilled women would be underutilized and there might be a reproduction of gender inequality across generations. The purpose of this study was therefore to explore the strategies that could improve the participation of female teachers in management of public primary schools. The objective of the study was to suggest possible strategies that can be used to enhance the deployment of female teachers to headship positions in primary schools in Kenya. This study was conducted in Nambale Sub-county. Descriptive survey design was used in this study. Out of a study population of 519, respondents comprising 45 head teachers, 45 deputy head teachers, 427 teachers drawn from 45 public primary schools in Nambale Sub-County, the Sub-County Director of Education (SCDE) and the Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standard Officer (SCQASO) (Nambale Sub-County), stratified sampling technique was employed to select 35 head teachers, 35 deputy head teachers and 196 teachers. Saturated sampling was used to select the SCDE and the SCQASO. Therefore, a sample size of 268 respondents, representing 52 % of the study population, was used in this study. Structured questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis guide were used as instruments of data collection. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings from the study revealed that although there is equal opportunity policy where teachers to be deployment to school headship positions are identified through interviews, selection criteria was not clear. The affirmative action policies did not

discriminate on basis of gender but it is essentially gender neutral in practice. Based on these findings, the study proposed that the Teachers Service Commission should come up with clear and precise deployment policies expressed in writing so that their compliance can easily be checked, Ministry of Education should design a formalized mentoring system to help female teachers develop self-esteem and aggressive managerial personalities of present and future leaders and create suitable female role models in leadership to serve as exhibit of successful and effective female leadership.

Keywords: strategies, female teachers, deployment, headship positions

1. Introduction

Globally, more women than ever are entering the labour force but majority of the top management positions in almost all countries are primarily held by men. Female managers tend to be concentrated in lower management positions and have less authority than men (Akpnar-posto, 2012; Australian Government, 2011; Barmao, 2013; Elborg-Woytek et al., 2013). In spite of significant advances which women have made in many areas of public life in the last two decades in areas of education, they remain severely underrepresented and are therefore still a long way from participating on the same footing as men in management and leadership of public educational institutions. In the year 2012, the global female labour force was estimated at 1.3 billion, about 39.9 percent of the total labour force, but greatly underrepresented in decision making and leadership in all areas. The consequence of this gender gap in leadership is that women do not participate fully in decisions that shape their lives and therefore the countries are not capitalizing on full potential of almost one half of world′s human resource available (ILO, 2012; Morley, 2013; World Bank, 2012).

World over, women have become the new majority in the highly qualified talent pool. In Europe and USA, women account for approximately six out of every ten University graduates and in the UK women represent almost half of the labour force (Davies, 2011). However, in U.S.A there is a paucity of women in executive roles (Elly, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Kochanowski, 2010; Seliger & Shames, 2009). Although teaching profession in European countries is dominated by women, more so in public primary schools, their participation rate at senior management level is very low (Vassiliou, 2010).

In Uganda, women are still the minority as both heads and deputy head teachers despite the Ugandan constitution of 1995 stating that women shall have a right to equal treatment with men in regards to opportunities in political, economic and social activities. Although women have made important advances in upgrading their academic qualifications making them eligible for promotion to leadership positions, men still dominate administrative positions as both deputy and head teachers in public primary and secondary schools (Kagoda, 2011). The situation is not different in Nigeria where women marginally participate in governance and management of educational institutions and hence remain invisible in leadership positions. For example, in 2013,

women held less than 14 percent of the total management positions in Nigerian Public sector (Oti, 2013).

In Kenya, women continue to be marginalized in many areas of society, especially in the sphere of leadership and decision making. According to a survey by the Ministry of Gender (2009), whilst only 30.9 percent of those employees in public service were women, 72 percent of these were in the lower cadres (Kamau, 2010). Moreover, the management of public primary and secondary schools, including appointment of head teachers, deputy head teachers, senior teachers and heads of departments, shows a trend of general inequalities in gender representation in favour of men resulting in glaring gender gaps (Barmao, 2013; Onyango, Simatwa & Ondigi, 2011; Republic of Kenya, 2012). Much as there is general recognition that there has been improvements in policy and legislative framework for gender equality in the world of work and enforcement of laws, the glaring gaps in top management positions still persist (Osumbah, Okwara & Onyango, 2013). For example, in Kenya, article 27(8) of the constitution obligates the state to implement the principle that not more than two thirds of members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender (Republic of Kenya, 2010). However, of the 43 state corporative appointments so far made in Kenya, only 2 women had been appointed (Standard, 2014, January 18).

Women are grossly underrepresented in governance of public affairs in Kenya. In education, access of women to decision-making positions is minimal, so is representation of women. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with its partners developed a gender policy in 2007 with an objective of addressing critical issues related to gender and education. The purpose of the policy was to provide a roadmap for MOE and stakeholders towards the achievement of gender parity in ensuring that both boys and girls, men and women, participate equally in learning and management of education at all levels (Republic of Kenya, 2007). Despite this gender policy, the management of both public primary and secondary schools in Kenya indicates a trend of male dominance (Parsaloi, 2012). Therefore, continued marginalization of women in top management positions is a paradox that merits systematic investigation. To this end, this study sought to examine some of the strategies that could improve the participation of female teachers in the management of public primary schools Namable Sub-county.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. A survey design is concerned with describing conditions that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on or trends that are developing (Kothari, 2004). It involves collection of information by use of interviews or administration of the questionnaires to a sample of respondents (Bryman, 2008; Kombo & Tromp, 2006; Oso & Onen, 2009). The researcher adopted this design because a large population can be studied with only a portion of that population being used to provide the required data (Kothari, 2004).

The study was conducted in Nambale Sub-county, Busia County, which at the time of study had two educational zones namely East North Zone with 27 public primary schools and Central Zone with 18 public primary schools giving a total of 45 public primary schools. Nambale sub-county was purposely selected because female teachers are in the majority but underrepresented in headship positions.

The study population was composed of 45 head teachers, 45 deputy head teachers, 427 assistant teachers, drawn from 45 public primary schools in Nambale sub-county, the SCDE (Nambale Sub-county) and the SCQASO (Nambale Sub-county), giving a total population of 519 respondents. Stratified sampling technique was employed to select 35 head teachers, 35 deputy head teachers and 196 teachers. Stratified sampling was employed in this study because the sample was heterogeneous, that is, made up of male and female respondents and the researcher indented to obtain a representative sample that would result into more detailed and reliable information (Kothari, 2004). Saturated sampling was appropriate for selection of the SCDE and the SCQASO because they are the only senior management officers who are directly concerned with policy implementation and deployment of head teachers at the Sub-County level. Therefore, the sample for the study consisted of 29 male head teachers, 6 female head teachers, 30 male deputies, 5 female deputies, 78 male teachers, 118 female teachers, the SCDE and the SCQASO giving a total of 268 respondents.

The questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis were the instruments of data collection in this study. To enhance content validity and face validity, the research instruments were validated by researcher's supervisors and a panel of experts in the University who reviewed, critiqued and provided feedback on the research instruments concerning any need for improvements in wording or addition of items. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were organized and categorized into themes to support or oppose the quantitative data. Quantitative data collected from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistical analysis included frequency counts and percentages and the findings were presented using tables. The researcher used frequencies and percentages because they easily communicate research findings to the majority of respondents (Gay, 1992).

3. Results

The main objective of this study was to examine the strategies that could improve the participation of female teachers in management of public primary schools in Kenya with specific reference to Nambale Sub-county. The questionnaires were administered to 78 male teachers, 118 female teachers, 30 male deputy head teachers and 5 female deputy head teachers. The questionnaires were measured on a five point Likert scale where 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree and 5=strongly agree. The SCDE, the SCQASO and 35 head teachers (29 males and 6 females) were interviewed. The table 1 that follows shows male and female teachers' responses pertaining to strategies that can be used to enhance the deployment of female teachers to headship positions.

Table 1: Strategies to Enhance the Deployment of Female Teachers to Headship Positions: Male and Female teachers' Responses

Statement	G	S Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		S Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
There is need for formal mentoring of female teachers	M	23	39.0	22	37.3	1	1.7	9	15.3	4	6.7	59	100
	F	26	24.1	37	34.3	6	5.6	19	17.6	20	18.4	108	100
There should be presence of role models for female teachers	M	29	49.2	23	39	3	5.1	4	6.7	0	0.0	59	100
	F	64	59.3	27	25	5	4.6	10	9.3	2	1.8	108	100
Opportunities should be provided for female teachers to demonstrate their abilities in assigned duties	M	20	33.9	20	33.9	3	5.2	12	20.3	4	6.7	59	100
	F	35	32.4	29	26.9	7	6.5	19	17.6	18	16.6	108	100
There is lack of enforcement of affirmative action	M	15	25.4	18	30.6	0	0.0	15	25.4	11	18.8	59	100
	F	49	45.4	32	29.6	9	8.3	11	10.2	7	6.5	108	100

Key: S = Strongly, f = frequency, M = Male, F = Female, G = Gender

In relation to table 1, 76.3% of male teachers agreed with the statement that there was need of formal mentoring of female teachers as a strategy to enhance their mobility to headship positions as 22% disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 58.4% the female teachers agreed with the statement as 36% were in disapproval. These findings are similar to another research finding of Jakobsh (2012) who concluded that mentors have a critical role to play in the advancement of women in leadership. Support by means of advice, opportunities to acquire diverse experiences and access to leadership development, all provide critical career skills. She observed that mentoring generally occurs on an informal basis but given the old boy network that has been central to men's mentoring and advancement, women traditionally have fewer mentoring opportunities open to them than their male colleagues. She further observes that women in executive positions stress that the lack of mentoring among women has been a hindrance to their climb up the leadership ladder. Because men generally occupy the highest positions of leadership, men are more likely to be in powerful position to open doors for those with inferior status. This is a serious hindrance to women's advancement to leadership positions. It can be inferred from these results that having mentors has positive effects on women career advancement but it is exceedingly difficult to obtain mentors due to few women in school headship positions.

Male respondents who supported the idea of presence of role models for female teachers to believe in themselves to be able leaders formed 88.2% as 6.7% were not in support. Similarly, 84.3% of the female teachers agreed with the statement as 11.1% were in disagreement. This issue of presence of role models to female teachers was supported by Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) who decried lack of role models and mentors in education leadership. They went on to add that same sex role models are crucial for women but unfortunately there are not enough to go around for all of the aspiring female leaders. Further, gender gap in senior jobs is not a result of too few qualified women but too few promotions and role models (Kahenda, 2014). These findings suggest that the presence of women in positions of power in an institution helps to legitimize other women and provides role models of status achievement with which women can identify. These results also indicate the importance of positive

reinforcement and the need for positive role models in order for more women aspirants to be able to take up senior positions.

With regard to female teachers being given opportunities to demonstrate their abilities through delegated duties, it was supported by 67.8% of the male teachers as 27% were in disagreement. As pertains to the female teachers, 59.3% were in agreement as 34.2% were in disagreement with the statement. Therefore, the analysis reveals that female teachers should be given opportunity to demonstrate their abilities through assigned and delegated duties. However, research findings of Obura (2011) revealed that women are not often given the chance of acting or deputizing for their male superiors, of practicing managerial skills and displaying their potential for leadership.

Lack of enforcement of affirmative action was supported by 56% and 75% of male and female teachers respectively whereas 44% and 16.7% of male and female teachers respectively were in disagreement. This analysis reveals that both male and female teachers supported the idea that there was lack of enforcement of affirmative action policy on advancement of women to leadership positions. These findings conform with other findings. Kariuki (2010) while commenting on impact of affirmative action policy on participation of women to leadership position expressed shock that in Kenya, while reserved seats for women exist in politics, there is no real push for education leadership. Therefore, the impact of affirmative action policy on participation of women in leadership positions outside political realm was wanting. She observed that affirmative action policy seems to be weak in advancement of women to leadership positions. There is lack of enforcement and there is no strict implementation. Similar observations were made by Morley (2013) when he commended that the pattern of male prevalence in senior leadership positions is visible in countries with diverse policies and legislation for gender equality. Nevertheless, the table 2 shows male and female deputy head teachers' responses with reference to strategies that can be used to enhance the deployment of female teachers to headship positions.

Table 2: Strategies to Enhance the Deployment of Female Teachers to Headship positions: Male and Female Deputy Head teachers' Responses

Statement	G	S Agree f	%	Agree f	%	Undecided f	%	Disagree f	%	S Disagree f	%	Total f	%
There is need for formal mentoring of female teachers	M	6	23.1	12	46.2	2	7.7	3	11.5	3	11.5	26	100
	F	1	20.0	4	80.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	100
There should be presence of role models for female teachers	M	5	19.2	16	61.5	0	0.0	4	15.4	1	3.9	26	100
	F	2	40.0	3	60.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	100
Opportunities should be provided for female teachers to demonstrate their abilities in assigned duties	M	2	7.7	13	50.0	2	7.7	5	19.2	4	15.6	26	100
	F	1	20.0	2	60.0	2	20.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	5	100
There is lack of enforcement of affirmative action	M	7	26.9	9	34.6	1	3.9	1	15.4	5	19.2	26	100
	F	2	40.0	2	40.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	5	100

Key: S = Strongly, f = frequency, M = Male, F = Female, G = Gender

The results of the analysis presented in table 2 indicated that 69.3% of male deputy head teachers agreed that there was need for formal mentoring for female teachers while 23% disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 100% of female deputy head teachers agreed with the statement. These findings agree with the study conducted by Charol (2012) who observed that in addition to family support, women need both networks and mentors. Women are much less likely than men to have formal or informal mentoring whether by male or female. She further observed that support from mentor is less likely to go to women than to men. She also observes that while both networks and mentorships are important, mentoring is more necessary for career advancement.

In addition, 80.7% of male deputy head teachers agreed that presence of role models could enhance advancement of female teachers to headship position as 19.3% objected that idea. As pertains to female deputy head teachers, 100% were in agreement. The results pointed out role modeling as key to improving access to headship positions. This finding is in agreement with the literature where role models have been found to enhance women to leadership positions. Davies (2011) pointed out that one of the factors that hinder women from rising up to managerial positions is the relatively low number of successful female role models which often compounds stereotypes and reinforces the perceived difficulties in rising up the ladder. He observed that there are few senior women to act as role models and mentors which implies a circular challenge in which a lack of senior women means a lack of role models, which perpetuates the problem. This findings indicates that the low number of female teachers at school headship positions creates a vicious cycle whereby there are not enough role models to motivate female teachers who are aspiring for leadership.

Provision of opportunities to demonstrate their abilities through delegated duties was supported by 57.7% of the male deputy head teachers as 34.6% were opposed. On the other hand, 60% of female deputy head teachers agreed with the statement as 20% were in disagreement. Adjah (2009) pointed out that discrimination in job assignment that leads to future promotions to leadership positions is a hindrance to women's career advancement as this is likely to decrease their career mobility and access to leadership positions.

With regard to lack of enforcement of affirmative action, it was supported by 61.5% of the male deputy head teacher as 34.6% were in disagreement. On the other hand, 80% of the female deputy head teachers were in agreement as 20% were in disagreement. It is apparent from the findings that both female and male deputy head teachers concurred that there was no enforcement of affirmative action policies meant to promote female teachers to headship positions in the Sub-county. These findings conform with other findings. Sperandio (2011), in his study on creating and supporting women's leadership in education lamented that despite the progress made globally in regard to women participation in political positions, no effort seemed to be made to make good of affirmative action policies in educational institutions. Therefore, he concludes that gender disparities still exist especially in regard to participation in public primary leadership positions. In the research of Akpinar-sposito (2012), it was found that lack of monitoring and affirmative action policy enforcement on behalf of the

government contribute to low representation of women at top management positions. This showed that well-meaning laws and policies remain largely on paper.

To investigate further on the strategies to enhance the deployment of female teachers to headship positions, 35 head teachers, (29 males and 6 females), the SCDE and SCQASO were interviewed. The respondents were asked to explain how support through mentoring would encourage female teachers into leadership since research has demonstrated that in general, women lack mentoring since it has always been associated with male model of grooming the next generation of leaders. The responses to this question indicated that there was no formal mentoring programme in place. These responses were also noted by Obura (2011) when she commented that literature speaks of informal mentoring systems among women and initiatives taken by individual women to mentor their juniors but there seems to be no organized mentoring of young women in ministry of education. Further, she observed that it has been recognized that the more influential the mentor, the more useful he or she may be. Respondents in this study sample were not offered any preparation for leadership.

Most of respondents indicated that mentoring was critical in the advancement of women in leadership in that support by means of advice, opportunities to acquire diverse experiences and access to leadership development provide essential career skills. Karima (2012) reinforces these findings by pointing out that female mentors can be a great tool to female leaders in the workplace as they work on developing their leadership skills. These role models are important to leadership development as they help women identify with success. Female leaders in the making are able to look up to established and successful female leaders in the work place as role models. She further notes that without these mentors, emerging female leaders are unable to promote themselves and be assertive about their performance and ambitions. She concludes that female mentors give these leaders confidence and guidance in their path to leadership directing them to success. Commenting on how mentoring can enhance female teachers' participation in headship of public primary schools one female head teacher said:

Mentoring has been occurring on an informal basis where men have been mentoring other men to succeed them in leadership. Women have had fewer informal mentoring opportunities open to them than their male colleagues.

These findings conform with other findings. Jacobsh (2012) reports that because men generally occupy the highest positions of leadership, men are more likely to be in powerful positions to open doors for those with inferior status. This is a serious barrier to women's advancement to leadership. Since the basis of patriarchy has been organized through men's relationship with other men, a similar unity among women is an effective means by which to combat forms and norms that largely exclude women. In addition, participants felt that a female support system and availability of female role leaders at work place are crucial for their success as leaders. One female head teacher succinctly stated that one of her role models was a certain female head teacher and as a result of what she observed she could tell herself that:

"If I plan and work hard I will be able to be like her .I really admire her...she has been encouraging me telling me that she knew I could make a good leader. She encouraged me from the beginning until I got confidence from her."

Another female head teacher identified a male head teacher as her mentor who gave her several opportunities while she was a teacher to exhibit leadership skills. He was also the one who recommended her for deployment by then. She had these to say:

"Women (teachers) have not often had the type of preparation experience to make them competitive for school headship posts. Leadership structure is mostly male dominated… this makes it difficult for women to move into leadership positions because there are few female deputies. Participation at deputyship position for at least three years was mandatory in administrative skills and opportunities for advancement to headship positions."

From these responses, there is evidence of the fact that female teachers were mentored but not in a structured set up. Here, the mentoring was ad hoc rising out of the keen interest on the part of the mentee to learn how to lead. This points to the need for Teachers Service Commission (TSC) to integrate mentoring into schools through the administrative structure.

In another question, respondents were asked to give ways in which both male and female teachers were involved equally, wherever administrative duties are delegated since confidence is acquired through learning and experience. The respondents indicated that delegation of tasks and assignment of duties such as class masters/mistress, games masters/mistress and being in charge of conduction and administration of exams was the common method employed to ensure that both male and female teachers were equally involved in administrative duties. However, analysis of schools inspection report of the year 2013 revealed that these are informal administrative duties which do not enhance teachers' professional advancement to school leadership positions. Moreover, the SCQASO pointed out that delegation of more authority and power for female teachers was lacking and wanting. Most interviewees indicated that both male and female teachers should be given opportunities for practicing administrative skills through delegation.

The respondents were further asked to give reasons why there was gender disparity at headship positions despite affirmative action policies. In responding to this question, the respondents concurred that some of the reasons include: lack of enforcement of the affirmative action policy, very few women occupy the position of deputyship, there were no clear deployment policies to headship positions by TSC and very few women apply for deployment to headship whenever the posts are advertised. Although there is equal opportunity policy where teachers to be deployment to school headship positions are identified through interviews, selection criteria was not clear. The affirmative action policies did not discriminate on basis of gender but it is essentially gender neutral in practice.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the stated objective, the following conclusion was reached:

(a) Formal mentoring was identified as important in preparation and development of a female cadre of leaders. Female respondents in the study were not offered any formal mentoring programme.

(b) There were few female teachers in leadership of public primary schools to serve as role models. Leader image building sets the stage for effective role modeling because followers identify with the values of role models, whom they perceive in positive terms. Therefore, having more women in senior positions makes the aspiring women leaders to believe in their own ability to become able leaders.

(c) Although appointment process to headship provided for equal opportunities, the study revealed that there was lack of transparency. There are no clear deployment and documented policies in place. Therefore, the appointment criteria are not made clear to everybody. This practice gave rise to speculation and suspicions about the criteria used in deployment. This goes against the spirit of openness and rules of fair play in deployment to school headship. This has resulted into a skewed deployment pattern in which female teachers are underrepresented in school headship positions.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are made for the improvement of the current practice:

(a) The TSC should come up with clear and documented policies that ensure equal opportunity for both male and female teachers. All information on available vacancies and interview results should be made public. As far as possible deployment policies should be expressed in writing, reviewed and revised regularly to keep them updated and relevant. This is because written policies tend to be clear and precise and their compliance can easily be checked.

(b) It is imperative for TSC to create more suitable role models in leadership positions for female teachers to emulate than is the case at present. Websites could also be created that includes pages devoted to highlighting inspirational women leaders and role models both of which have personal messages from some of key women in educational institution leaders talking about career paths, experiences and their thoughts on gender issues. This can help inspire others.

(c) Creation and implementation of formal mentoring programme for female teachers.

Mentoring process could provide means of tapping the abilities and experiences of female leaders to champion gender equality. Mentor relationship can be used at any stage of career to support the advancement of talents that are particularly effective in development of leadership skills. Mentoring therefore would change the way female teachers perceive themselves and would give them confidence in their own capacity to be effective leaders. This is due to the fact that an effective mentoring network could provide guidance and support to females who are reluctant to enter leadership and encourage those who are already in leadership to do their work better.

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