Women Involvement in Education Management in the Public Service: A Case Study of the Ministry Of Education Headquarters-Basic Education

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Abstract: The Ministry of Education is charged with the responsibility of developing national policies and programmes for accessible quality and affordable school education, post school, high school and academic research. Basic Education department, one of the wings in the MOE, looks at the running of pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of teaching and learning.

This department has less number of women in the leadership positions. The under-representation of women in top educational management has impacted negatively on government policies and general educational curriculum, which has lacked gender mainstreaming for equitable development.

The purpose of the study was to investigate challenges being faced by women in the involvement and participation in education management at the Ministry of Education, directorate of Basic Education.

The study used descriptive survey design. Data collection was done using semi structured questionnaires. The data collected was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively using descriptive statistics with the help of Statistical Professional Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 2.0.

The findings showed that majority of women in the education managerial levels were few and could not perform their duties and responsibilities effectively due to administrative issues like gender stereotyping, Socio-cultural factors such as religion, taboos and economic factors such as lack of financial muscle, contributing to their dismal performances. It is recommended that the gender mainstreaming policies and other related pieces of legislations supporting women involvement, participation and ascending to leadership roles be implemented for the benefit of women and the society at large.

Keywords: Economic, Socio-cultural, Administrative, Women, Gender, Education Management.

Background of the Study

Different policies and guidelines developed by the ministry have brought a team of education experts in the teaching career to manage the education sector. Currently, the country has introduced a new system of education, which is competency based. The 2-6-3-3-3 system of education is yet to be rolled out by the Ministry of Education next year, 2019. Its main objective is to equip learners with competencies such as skills, knowledge and attitude for the 21st century and to align the country's education system with the Vision 2030 and the rest of the world, especially the East Africa region as captured in the Sessional Paper No.2; Prof. Douglas Odhiambo report 2015; Kenya Gazette Notice No. 1063 (RoK T., Establishment on the taskforce on the realignment of the education to the new constitution, 2011).

The Basic Education department has more than 2,000 employees of which 30% are women (UNESCO, 2012). Majority of men in the department are in the education managerial positions. According to the Kenya Demographic Survey (2017), the percentage of women in a population of 40 million is 70%. This is higher than the number of men, which represented a percentage of 45%. Despite the affirmative action, as spelt out in the Constitution of Kenya 2010, women in education managerial positions are still below a third of the population. The organizational structure of the Ministry of Education and its directorates is shown in the diagram below (Figure 1).

In Kenya, under-representation of women in top educational management and leadership positions has impacted negatively on government policies and general educational curriculum, which has lacked gender mainstreaming (RoK T., Strategic Plan 2008-2011, 2018). Working class women teachers have also lacked mentors and the scenario has tended to be cyclic (RoK, 2012). Under-representation of women in positions of senior management within Educational Institutions continue to be a matter of concern, particularly as the teaching force is largely dominated by women. Women under representation in education sectors are well replicated in the Directorate of Basic Education where few women have picked up the managerial roles.

Statement of the Problem

In the education management, women have been experiencing challenges in ascending and taking managerial responsibilities. Men are occupying 99.2% of the total 110 managerial and decision-making positions at the Basic Education Directorate. This is despite the efforts, which are being put in place to address gender disparities in the workforce. National policies and practices on affirmative action and equal representations have been developed to considerably improve the participation of women involvement in educational management and other sectors. The population of women in the country is 50.1%, while men are at 49.9% (National Census, 2010). This high number of women population has been translated in the

learning institutions, which have experienced an increase in the number of enrollment and completion of women in high education. Regardless of this, the percentage of women representation in the educational management is still low. This is a critical challenge that needs to be addressed, not only in all government and private institutions, but also in the whole country.

Significance of the Study

The study will be of great benefit to the government as a whole in monitoring and evaluating the levels of women involvement in the education management in most government institutions. It will help the Ministry of Education to develop various policies and strategies necessary to address challenges faced by women in ascending and involving in decision making organs at the top managerial levels. The study will enable other institutions in the private sector to develop strategies suitable to develop women in management careers, which will increase women involvement, appreciation and acknowledgement in the fields of management and academic development.

The study will be a model direction for the societal perspective of women. This will assist the communities and the society to acknowledge women in positions of management and especially the girl child education. The study will therefore erase the deep-rooted traditional concept on women as only a homemaker. Female students will also benefit from the findings of the study as it will highlight the extent of gender disparity and how female students can overcome the barriers to their participation in management and leadership.

General Objective

The main objective of the study was to investigate challenges being faced by women involvement in education management in the Ministry of Education. The study sought to establish the barriers women face in taking up managerial positions at the Directorate of Basic Education head office, Kenya.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey design, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research describes the existing conditions and attitudes through observation and interpretation techniques (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003).

The research looked at the population of men and women working at the Ministry of Education, the directorate of Basic education at the head office in Nairobi, which was one hundred and ten (110). The size of the sample was 77 respondents, which is 70% of the total sample. This was to realize and attain reliable and a balanced data.

The study applied purposive sampling technique in order to capture the views of those who are in the managerial position in the Ministry of education, Basic Education. The views of the respondents were captured using questionnaires and interviews. The raw data collected was collated, cleaned, coded and fed into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program for analysis as descriptive statistics, according to the objectives of the study to give a meaning to the study. Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was used to analyze the qualitative data.

Results

The total targeted respondents were 77 but only 73 actually responded to the questionnaires administered, representing 95% of the response rate in the study. Questionnaires from four

respondents were not collected due to the unwillingness of the respondents to submit them to the researcher. The questionnaires were being dropped and picked later by the researcher.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Regarding Socio-Cultural factors affecting women involvement in education management at the directorate of Basic Education head office in Nairobi, the respondents were asked to give some social-cultural factors experienced by women in education management. The results were as shown below in the Figure 1 and 2.
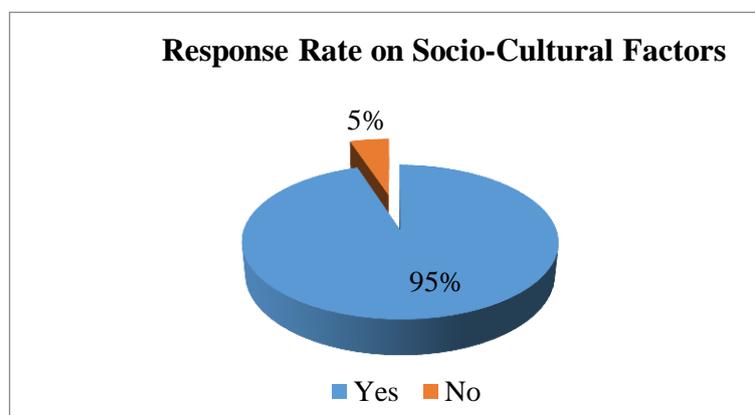
Figure 1. Response Rate on Socio-Cultural Factors
Source: Field Survey, 2018
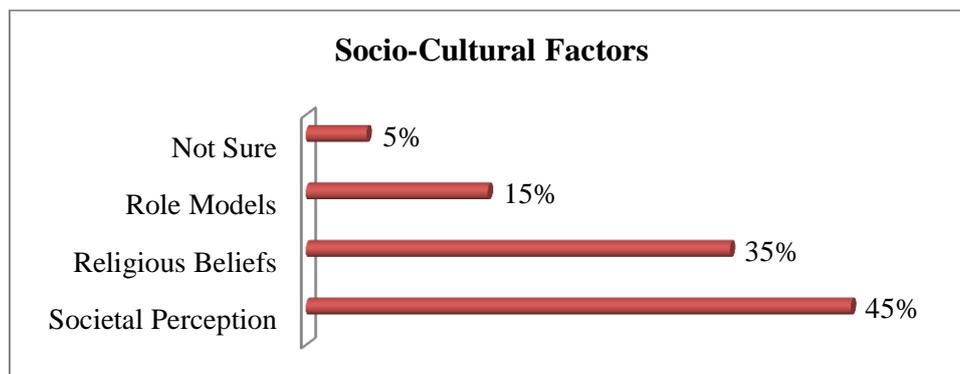
**Figure 2. Socio-Cultural Factors**
Source: Field Survey, 2018

About 95% of the respondents agreed that women are affected by factors such religious beliefs, lack of role models and community attitudes towards women. Over 45% of the respondents cited the perception of the society towards women leadership. Members of the society are not viewing women positively, thinking that they cannot equally perform the functions of a leader. Religious beliefs are strong in most cases with 35% of the respondents agreeing that they really influence negatively on women ascending to managerial positions.

Around 15% of the respondents said women lack of role models whom they could look up to for inspirations and wok towards being like them. Five percent (5%) of the respondents were not sure whether social-cultural factors were impediment in women ascending to managerial positions. Going by the high number of the respondents, it is clear that the effects of social culture have got a lot of impact on the way the world, especially in the developing ones perceive women leadership. Most of the issues listed are not factual; they are beliefs, which

are not well grounded. This is even a replica in other government departments in Kenya, since different places and communities have different social-cultural practices that challenge the view of a woman as a manager or a leader in any public position.

Economic Factors
In finding out how economic factors affect women in education management in Basic Education, Ministry of education, respondents were subjected to state how economic factors affect women involvement in education management at the department of Basic Education, Ministry of Education. The response was as shown below in the Figure 3 and 4.
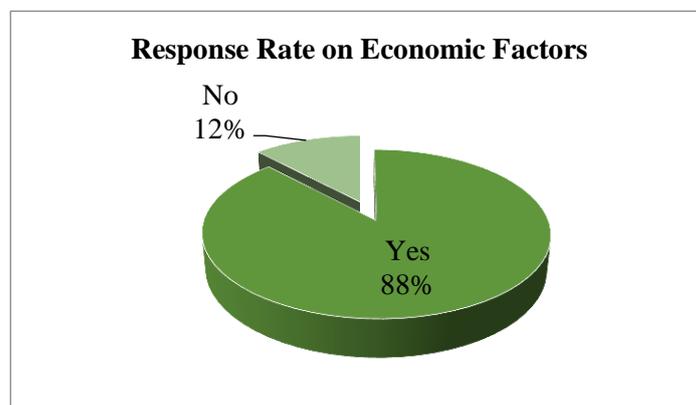
Figure 3. Response Rate on Economic Factors
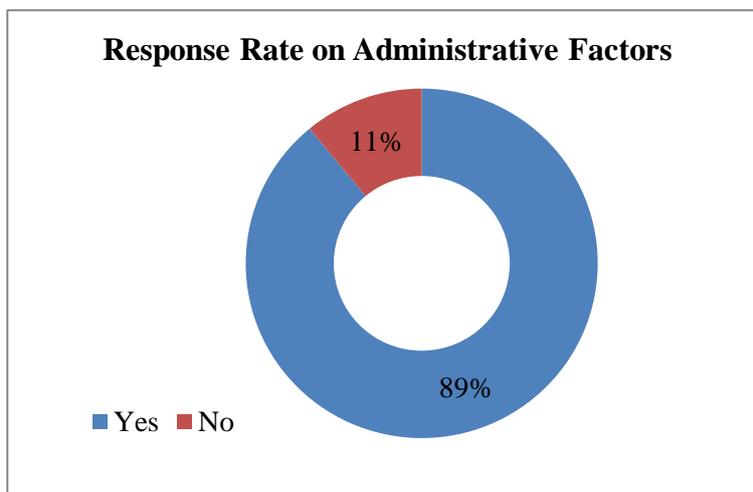Source: Field Survey, 2018
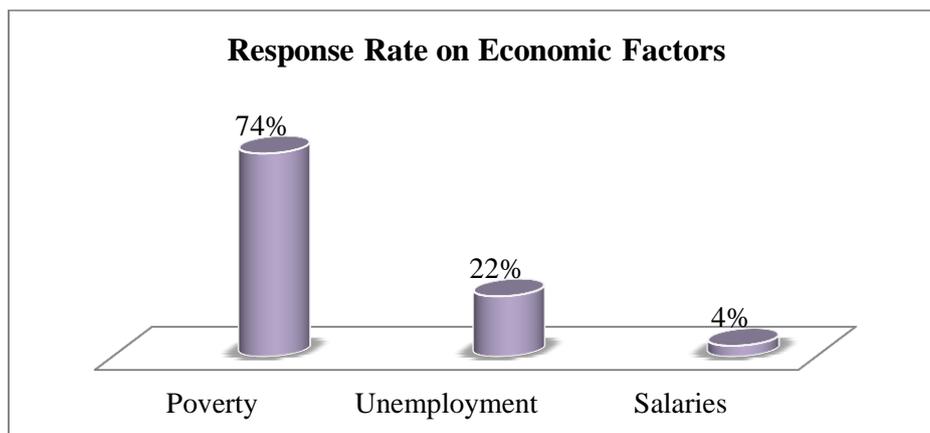
Figure 4. Economic Factors
Source: Field Survey, 2018

According to the analysis, 88% of the respondents agreed that economic factors affect the women involvement in education management at a very high rate. Those who did not agree with economic factors were 12%. Among those who agreed 74% indicated that poverty is a key stumbling block to women in ascending to managerial positions.

Most young ladies are coming from homes where it is difficult to even afford three meals per day, leave alone other financial requirements in pursuit of their education. Those respondents who said that women were facing hurdles in leadership positions due to low wages and salaries were 4%. Unemployment recorded 22%, which shows the nature of lack of jobs being faced by youths in the Kenya labour market.

Administrative Factors

In establishing administrative factors affecting women in the education management at the directorate of Basic Education head office, Nairobi,89% of the respondents agreed that there were some influences. The results of their views were as shown in Figures 5 and 5below.

Figure 5. Response Rate on Administrative Factors
Source: Field Survey, 2018
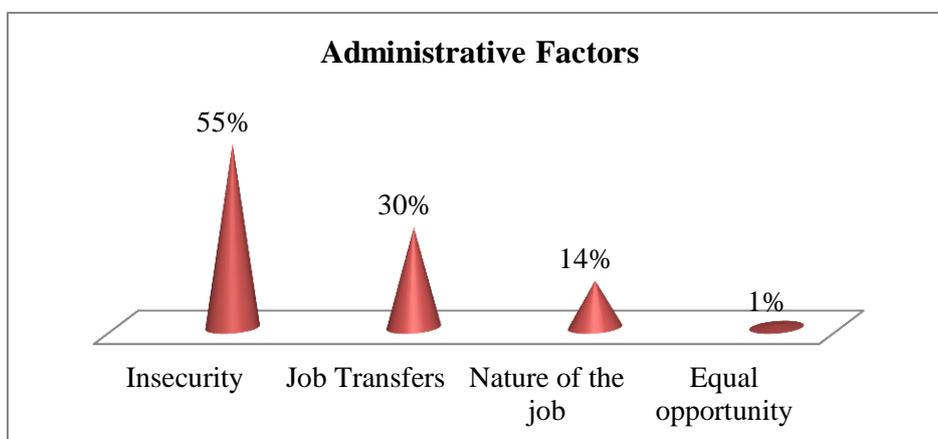
Figure 6 Administrative Factors
Source: Field Survey, 2018

Most respondents indicated that many women were facing great challenges handling complicated administrative responsibilities and especially in hostile situations. Insecurity was at 55% while nature of job was at 30%. About 14% of the respondents felt that the job transfers and commitments of their families were making women to play it safe by not climbing to higher managerial positions. It was very difficult for women to abandon their families when transferred to new stations. Some chose not to report and resign due to family issues. Men do not really understand women when they are living far apart. Distance relationships is a difficult concept to handle as a family as had been concurred by the respondents. However, 1% of the population felt that women are in the same footing with men and can handle all the circumstances in the organization.

Absolute majority of the respondents strongly agreed that women in management positions have to prove themselves to the society that they are capable. While men are assumed to be

experts, majority disagreed that women do not need to work under them, they can do this on their own.

Women prefer to make informed choices on job responsibilities based on what is important to them. The analysis further found that women tend to express less confidence in their ability to assume managerial positions. Other respondents strongly agreed that Women can bring specialized abilities and perceptions, which are captured best through staff rather than line assignment. The facts can be said to be the same on all the management positions in all sector and specifically on the education sector.

Discussion
Social-Cultural Factors
Socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices dominant in our society have gender differentiated effects on boys' and girls' education. In most cases, more prejudice is placed on girls while boys are favored in all aspects of life and according to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2017, roughly the margin of women population in Kenya is slightly higher than that of men.

Traditionally, girls are viewed to be inferior and therefore discriminated right from birth. Studies of the situation of girls show that their disadvantaged position and emanate from the parental and societal attitude which stresses the value of sons against daughters. As a result, girls' education is given little or no attention while that of boys' being very important since they are expected to be the breadwinners, heirs, professional persons and leaders of society as articulated in the UNICEF report (1998).

Thus, the girl child is socialized to be a self-sacrificing person destined for biological reproduction and service to others, especially her family. By contrast, boys are much valued, wanted and favored. Therefore, girls become helpers to their mothers at an early age and gradually internalize their roles and disadvantages (Deventer, 2000). According to Abagi (1996) our social image of the differences between women and men is a projection of our cultural environment in which we live. This image is a self-fulfilling prophecy. In addition, formal education of girls is even viewed with suspicion as a threat to their morality. Thus, parents fear losing honour, prestige and bride price due to effects of schooling of their daughters.

Until modern times, legal and cultural practices combined with the inertia of long standing religious and educational conventions restricted women's entity and participation in the workforce.

Economic Factors
It is commonly assumed that education has an important positive effect on economic growth, but to date the evidence for this assumption has been surprisingly weak. Evidence shows that, at the individual level, more years of schooling lead to higher income. But, at the macroeconomic level, empirical evidence relating changes in education measures to economic growth has so far been ambiguous (Kowani, 1980). Gender equality is important for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons. It affects social harmony and society's wellbeing in various dimensions. It involves policy dimensions in all areas including education, poverty, labour, financial markets, political and economic empowerment, institutions and overall economic development (Dowling, 1981). Gender equality enhances prospects of achieving both international and national commitments such as Millennium Development

Goals, Education for All, Convention on the Education of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Vision 2030, 2003- 2007 Economic Recovery and Employment Creation Strategy, poverty reduction and sustainable development either directly and or indirectly (Powell and Graves, 2003). Disparity in employment between women and men still exists despite some improvement being seen in recent year. Gender inequality on the other hand undermines economic growth and social development. This is particularly true among less developed economies where women are often constrained from having equal access to social and economic capital such as employment, political, financial and social services. Consequently, empowering women and enabling them to actively participate and contribute to social, economic and political activities is important for sustainable development (Deventer, 2000).

Entry of women into higher professions like law and medicine was delayed in most countries due to women being denied entry to universities and qualification for degrees, for example, Cambridge University only fully validated degrees for women late in 1947. Women were largely limited to low pay and poor status occupations for most of the 19th and 20th centuries, or earned less pay than men for doing the same work. Wages or salary are part of a modern phenomenon, one that developed at the same time as the growth of paid employment for men, but women have been challenged by inequality in the work force. In western European countries, the nature of womens' employment participation remains markedly different from that of men. Women and men often participate in economic sectors in sharply different proportions. This is due to traditional association of certain types of work with a particular gender, economic, social and natural variables that impact the gender distribution in different occupations, including within a region or country (United Nation 2004-2007).

Administrative Factors

An academic administration is a branch of school employees responsible for the maintenance and supervision of the institution and separate from the faculty or academics, although some personnel may have joint responsibilities. Some type of separate administrative structure exists at almost all academic institutions, as fewer and fewer schools are governed by employees who are also involved in academic or scholarly work (Powell and Graves, 2003).

Men are represented to a far greater extent than women in all decision making forms within the legislative, administrative and judicial spheres. Changes taking place in today's schools open a window of opportunity for more women to move into educational administration. Education reform brings a new governance structure, modifies leadership practices, and emphasizes accountability for results. In the midst of this school evolution, vacancies for principal and superintendent positions are increasing at a time when more women than men are enrolled in preparation programs for educational administration. A number of conditions that currently exist affect educational administration and have potential for redirecting hiring practices for these positions. A convergence of school reform, supply and demand for administrators, and societal changes enhances opportunities for more women to become school administrators (Logan, 1998). Moreover, Principles of public Service Act, 2009 stipulated one of the principles as relationship and impartial and equitable provision of services among many.

The negative consequences of employment-related stress for both occupational well-being and family well-being have been demonstrated in many studies (Sverke *et al.,* 2002). In the occupational domain, job insecurity has been associated with reduced job satisfaction, decreased work commitment and impaired performance.

For many women in addition to the roles they hold in their companies, they remain the primary caretakers for families (Hughes *et al.,* 2009). As for the time constraints and demands of a job becomes more important upon promotion and forces many women to choose between family and career. Many women have voluntarily left their jobs due to family decisions.

Once a woman has children she is much more reluctant to travel and work long hours due to their responsibilities at home, further hindering her promotion likelihood.

Conclusion

The study finally concluded that there is a big need for the government and stakeholders in the ministry of education to check on other challenges, which could be affecting women who are in the education management positions and bring forth a policy on gender equality.

The study concluded that without proper arrangement women may not be represented well going by their population. In the current general population census, women are slightly higher than men. This should be replicated at managerial positions in the education sector and any other sector in the country. Women have got equal capability and therefore, they should not be denied such headship chances. The study concluded that more research be carried out to understand how women should be encouraged to take up the headship positions in the public service.

Recommendations for Future Studies

According to the objectives and the analysis of the research study, the study recommends that; the existing policies on gender mainstreaming in public service be implemented to the later. A team should be formed to look into ways of implementing the policies. Women should be included in the taskforce teams charged with the responsibilities of making policies in regard to women representation in education management leadership positions.

There should be women role models who have been leaders at different levels to inspire other women into leadership positions. This would encourage women and give them an example to look up to, when scaling up the career ladder and help them aim higher at different managerial positions. This group of professionals will be able to encourage the junior women in the lower management positions on taking up the senior management positions.

It is a good practice for leaders like the president to consider women with excellent academic merits and appoint them in managerial positions based on their experiences also.

Areas for Future Research

This study proposes further research work to be done in the following areas:

Gender role orientation: Gender roles are "socially and culturally defined prescriptions and beliefs about the behavior and emotions of men and women. Many theorists believe that perceived gender roles form the basis for the development of gender identity.

A gender role is a theoretical construct in social sciences that refers to a set of social and behavioral ways or norms, which are considered within specific cultures to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific group (Powell and Graves, 2003). Other economic, administrative and socio-cultural factors such as retirement, inflation, behavioral norms were never looked at hence, good areas to explore in any future related studies.

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