



Perspectives on Influence of Government Policies on Appointment of Head teachers in Mixed Secondary Schools in Vihiga District, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Closing the leadership gap between men and women is one of the central challenges of this century. Women are under-represented in educational management at all levels, worldwide. In Kenya, although the Teachers Service Commission employs all teachers on equal terms and does not discriminate on the basis of gender, male teachers seem to dominate headship in mixed secondary schools. The Government has initiated policies to reduce the gender gap, but it is not clear as to the outcome of the initiatives. The purpose of this study therefore was to establish the distribution of head teachers in mixed secondary schools by gender and perspectives on government policies on appointment of head teachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The study population was 34 Head teachers, 465 teachers, 34 Board of Governors (BOG) Chairpersons, 34 Parents Teachers Association (PTA) Chairpersons and one District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (DQASO). Simple random sampling technique was used to sample 31 Head teachers, 31 BOG Chairpersons and 31 PTA Chairpersons. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 139 teachers (on the basis of gender) representing 33% of the teachers while saturated sampling technique was used to sample one DQASO. Data was collected using questionnaire, in-depth-interview and document analysis guide. The study found out that only 15.8% of head teachers in mixed secondary schools were female. This was blamed on ineffective government policies. The study calls for review of government policies and commitment to gender balance policy implementation.

KEY WORDS: Perspectives, government policies, gender balance.

INTRODUCTION

In late August 1995, some 25,000 women from all over the world gathered in China. Their intention was to press their agendas upon government delegations from 185 nations who had been invited by the United Nations (UN) to debate a programme of action for women for the coming decade. All nations /delegates applauded the recognition by the UN that women's rights are human rights. The conference illustrated the widespread recognition of, and challenges to, patterns of inequality that generates gender disadvantages and committed them to see measures that might improve the educational standards of women across the world (Bilton et al, 1996; Reynolds, 1995).

Gender disparities in employment opportunities in Kenya are a real challenge to development. Despite their growing participation in the workplace, there are still very few women in the top echelons of public decision and policy making positions in Kenya (Suda, 2002). This may be much the same in school headship. As a member of the United Nations and the International Labor Organization, the Kenya government is obliged to align its policies with the international standards and requirements on gender. Such policies are examined below.

Affirmative action

In the year 2006, the government that henceforth, all appointment in public service were to be reserved for women. The directive was intended to create equity in employment of men and women and promotion to senior positions in the public sector (Gender and Governance Programme, 2010). This policy deliberately attempts to reform or eradicate discrimination on the basis of color, gender, creed and geographical locations. Its intention is to provide equal opportunities to all competing groups in the society, including women. But while it has been hailed as a milestone in

eradicating discrimination and reforming the education sector, its results remain a contested terrain. The percentage of African women in school administration has barely risen (Suda, 2002). Some people have attributed the policy's failure to the fact that it is a quota filling but not a development-oriented exercise. Further more, some African governments are not committed to the cause of women. Thus there is need for deliberate political will by African government to implement the conventions and protocols that address gender issues. Strategic goal number 1 of the Beijing platform implored governments 'to commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in government bodies and committees, public administrative entities, measures to substantially increase the number of women, to achieve equal representation of women through positive action in all government and public administration positions' (Makura, 2000). A study carried out in United States of America (USA) found out that its fruits were not good as expected, since the percentage of female head teachers had barely risen due to women's belief that the policies are a token gesture that do not reach into the depth and subtle politics, especially in schools. The concern for the present study was to find out extent to which affirmative action has influenced gender balance in the appointment of head teachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District.

Millennium Development Goals

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, providing universal primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, ensuring environmental sustainability, creating global partnership for development, all by the target date of 2015-form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. The Kenyan government has the obligation to align its laws with the international standards and requirements of the goal number 3 of the MDGs, which emphasizes on the promotion of equality and empowerment of women. This goal aimed at eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2015 (Government of Kenya, 2005). Status and perspectives on attainment of this goal is the focus of this study.

Equal Educational Opportunities

It must be understood that historically, education in Sub-Saharan Africa and even Asia was initially available only to males. This then entails that women were from the onset disadvantaged in the formal employment sector since jobs in this sector are mainly negotiable through acquisition of education and skills. It has been reported that even in Latin America where the expansion of educational system started earlier, women were denied formal education during colonialism but often received instructions to enable them perform domestic tasks and raise their children (Avalos, 2003). Women's inadequate access to education has been seen as the source of the various discriminations that they suffer today (Afigbo, 1991). Ideally education trains manpower for the economy, helps to fully develop the potentials of individuals and helps such individuals consummate employment opportunities (Ali, 1988). In other wards formal education ideally enhances labour forces participation of women, for it broadens their experience and gives them access to new resources and skills (Shaheed, 1995). But these lofty aims of education are fulfilled only where the individual offers himself for employment.

Eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education was a Millennium Development Goal set to be achieved by 2005 (World Bank, 2002). Besides, governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and researchers have shown a lot of interest on issues of equality of educational provisions to both males and females. In Kenya the introduction of free primary and secondary education was to boost both male and female access to education though the retention rate for females is low due to pregnancy and social-cultural factors. Re-admission of girl-mother to school was a specific attempt by the government to enhance female participation in secondary education. Though there is reluctance by the head teachers to implement this policy. The government has also introduced the lowering of cut off entry point for females at the university to boost their number. However, male enrolment rate at the university outnumbers females (Government of Kenya, 2005). According to the Ministry of Education (Government of Kenya, 2007), gender disparity in enrolment in teacher education at secondary schools was high. Between 1999 and 2003 the average enrolment of females at secondary teaching training colleges was 44.3%. At the university

level, enrolment in teacher education degree programmes reveals a wide gender disparity in favour of males. In the 2002/2003 to 2004/2005 academic years of those enrolled in teacher education programmes in public universities, only 39.8% were females. Thus the lower performance of girls in the secondary schools was the main cause of gender inequality in teacher education. This current study differed from the above because it was to find out the extent to which equal educational opportunities influenced gender balance in appointment to headship in mixed secondary schools .

Equal Promotional Opportunities

According to TSC (2005), promotions of teachers from one grade to another are governed by the relevant schemes of service and such teachers may be deployed by the commission in administrative posts such as principals. Thus any teacher who wishes to be considered for promotion should apply when the commission advertises the posts by completing the relevant form prescribed in their schedules XX11 and XX111. In Britain, a survey carried out on headship promotions found out that promotion of males to headship at the secondary school level was more likely than women. As much as the gender split at the secondary level was more even with 56% of teachers being females and 44% males, 65% of the male teachers were secondary school head teachers (Gender & Education, 2003). While the above outlined policies aim at closing the gender gap in school management, impact of the policies is yet to be established particularly in Mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District, Kenya. The purpose of this study therefore was to investigate the distribution of head teachers by gender as well as perspectives of stakeholders on influence of the government policies on appointment of head teachers in the mixed secondary schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design that encompassed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The questionnaire, interview schedule and document analysis guide were used to get responses from the participants. Descriptive survey design involves data collection in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of study .This design was chosen for this study for its appropriateness in educational fact finding which yields accurate information in a short period of time (Borg & Gall, 1996).

Venue, population and Sample

The study was conducted in Vihiga District in the Republic of Kenya .Population of the study was 34 Head teachers, 465 teachers, 34 Board of Governors (BOG) Chairpersons, 34 Parents Teachers Association(PTA) Chairpersons and one District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (DQASO). Simple random sampling technique was used to select 31 head teachers, 31 BOG chairpersons, and 31 PTA chairpersons from the 34 mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District, Kenya, representing 91.1 % of each of the study population. This allowed each and every member an equal chance of being selected. Teachers were sampled using stratified random sampling. The strata were gender of the teachers, as female and male. Stratified random sampling helped the researcher to come up with a study sample and information that was representative of the entire population. According to Nkpa (1997) the stratified sampling procedure helps to reduce chance variations between a sample and the population it represents. It also allowed each member of the target population to have an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample. While saturated sampling technique was used to sample the only one DQASO .

Instruments of Data Collection

The research was carried out using questionnaire, interview schedule and document analysis guide. Questionnaires and interviews are used extensively in educational research to collect information that is not directly observable (Borg & Gall, 1996). Questionnaires allowed data to be collected from many respondents within a short period of time. Interviews were used to obtain information which the respondents would not reveal by any other method of data collection. The researcher developed the questionnaires from the literature review and by generating questions that were felt to be relevant to the study.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Validity

The validity of instruments was determined by presenting the instruments to 3 research methods experts in the Faculty of Education, Maseno University who examined the content and gave advice on face validity. Their suggestions were then used to revise the questionnaire, interview schedule guide and Document analysis guide.

Reliability

Before the instruments were used to collect data, a pilot study was administered to 3 head teachers, 3 BOG chairpersons 3 PTA chairpersons and 47 teachers to determine their reliability. This was done on persons who were not part of the study sample. Inconsistencies, deficiencies and weaknesses noted were corrected and included in the final instruments.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher secured a research permit and authorization letter from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology before proceeding to the field for data collection. The researcher personally visited all the sampled schools and administered the questionnaires. Different dates were set for administering interviews to head teachers, BOG and PTA Chairpersons and DQASOs. The researcher scrutinized and analyzed relevant documents to ascertain their credibility.

Methods of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of percentages, frequencies and means. Qualitative data obtained from interview schedules was transcribed, organized into categories, sub- categories and themes as they emerged from the field and presented in prose form and peoples verbatim talk according to the themes and objectives of the study.

RESULTS

Distribution of Headteachers By Gender

Documents were analyzed to establish the trend in the distribution of head teachers in mixed Secondary schools by gender. The results are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of head teachers in mixed secondary schools from 2005-2009

Year	Number of schools	Number of head teachers by gender		
		Male f %		Female f %
2005	67	59	88	08
2006	69	59	86	10
2007	72	60	83	12
2008	34	30	88	04
2009	34	26	76	08
Average	46.8	84.2	8.4	15.8

Source: Vihiga District Education Office, 2009.

Based on the study findings in Table 1, headship positions in mixed secondary schools have been dominated by Male teachers for the past six years. On average, female heads accounted for only 15.8% between 2005 and 2009. This is far below the government recommended proportion of at least 30%.

Perspectives on Government Policies

Government policies initiated to reduce the gender gap were affirmative action, implementation of Millennium Development Goal on women empowerment, in-service training and equal educational opportunities. Stakeholders' perspectives on influence of these policies are given in tables 2 ,3,4 ,5and 6.

Table 2. Affirmative action policy

Respondents	n	VLE	LE	U	SE	N/A
		f %	f %	f %	f%	f%
Head teachers	31	8(25.8%)	9(29%)	2(6.5%)	10(32.2%)	2(4.3%)
Teachers	139	34(24.5%)	43(30.9%)	16(11.5%)	40(28.8%)	6(4.3%)
BOG Chairpersons	31	7(22.6%)	15(48.4%)	4(12.9%)	5(16.1%)	0(00%)
PTA Chairpersons	31	10(32.2%)	12(38.7%)	2(6.5%)	5(16.1%)	2(6.5%)

Key; VLE-very large extent, LE-large extent, U-undecided, SE-small extent ,NA-not applicable.

Based on the responses in Table 2 ,majority of the respondents felt that affirmative action policy had contributed to the increased number of female head teachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District. One of the head teachers interviewed said that “before the introduction of affirmative action , mixed secondary schools were rarely headed by female head teachers but now we have 8, which is an improvement since the policy at least reserves 1/3 of appointments for women”. But the same respondents said that this policy was a failure in itself since it was a quota filling and not half filling or 1:1 ratio.

Table 3. Millennium development goal on women empowerment

Respondents	n	VLE	LE	U	SE	N/A
		f %	f %	f %	f%	f%
Head teachers	31	6(19.4%)	10(32.2%)	6(19.4%)	6(19.4%)	3(9.7%)
Teachers	139	16(11.6%)	39(28.1%)	29(20.7%)	42(30.2%)	13(9.4%)
BOG Chairpersons	31	7(22.6%)	11(35.5%)	3(9.7%)	8(25.8%)	2(6.5%)
PTA Chairpersons	31	7(22.6%)	13(41.9%)	1(3.2%)	6(19.4%)	4(12.9%)

Most of the respondents (except the teachers) indicated that millennium development goal on women empowerment had helped women to be appointed as head teachers in mixed secondary schools. However, teachers noted that lack of political will by the government to deliberately put measures in place to help women ascend to headship lowered the number of women in headship position.

Table 4. In-Service Training

Respondents	n	VLE	LE	U	SE	N/A
		f %	f %	f %	f%	f%
Head teachers	31	10(32.2%)	14(45.1%)	2(6.5%)	3(9.7%)	2(6.5%)
Teachers	139	26(18.7%)	31(23.3%)	28(20.1%)	40(28.8%)	14(10%)
BOG Chairpersons	31	7(22.6%)	15(48.4%)	4(12.9%)	5(16.1%)	0(00%)
PTA Chairpersons	31	10(32.2%)	12(38.7%)	2(6.5%)	5(16.1%)	2(.6.5%)

Majority of the respondents indicated that Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) in-service training of teachers equipped them with managerial skills needed for headship and kept them abreast with the new educational policies. One of the head teachers interviewed said that “in- service training has really exposed the female teachers to the outside world and imparted confidence in them to forge ahead as school administrators”.

Table 5. Equal educational opportunities

Respondents	n	VLE	LE	U	SE	N/A
		f %	f %	f %	f%	f%
Head teachers	31	11(24.5%)	8(25.8%)	4(12.9%)	6(19.4%)	2(1.4%)
Teachers	139	34(24.5%)	50(36%)	28(20.1%)	25(18%)	2(1.4%)
BOG Chairpersons	31	6(19.4%)	13(41.9%)	2(6.5%)	10(32.2%)	2(6.5%)
PTA Chairpersons	31	13(41.9%)	10(32.2%)	4(12.9%)	5(16.1%)	0(00%)

Majority of the respondents agreed that equal educational opportunity in Kenya had promoted both males and females to acquire the necessary skills required for employment, unlike in the past where females were denied formal education and given only instructions to enable them perform domestic tasks of raising children. Although the retention rate for the girl-child up to the university level was low.

Table 6. Equal promotional opportunities

Respondents	n	VLE	LE	U	SE	N/A
		f %	f %	f %	f%	f%
Head teachers	31	17(54.8%)	8(25.8%)	3(9.7%)	3(9.7%)	0(00%)
Teachers	139	39(28.1%)	47(33.8%)	19(13.7%)	30(21.6%)	4(12.9%)
BOG Chairpersons	31	12(38.7%)	10(32.2%)	2(12.9%)	5(16.1%)	0(00%)
PTA Chairpersons	31	8(25.8%)	11(35.5%)	1(3.2%)	9(29%)	2(6.5%)

Majority of the respondents agreed that equal promotional opportunities had helped both males and females be appointed to headship positions in mixed secondary school provided they made the qualifications necessary for head ship, though many women failed to apply or present themselves to be the interviewed while others failed to take up positions due to the schools being far from their homes.

DISCUSSION

This study found out that the government had put in place various policies to help female teachers to be appointed as head teachers in mixed secondary schools. The policies had promoted representation of females in school headship in mixed secondary schools as perceived by the stakeholders. However, gender balance was yet to be attained at 50:50. In fact females accounted for only 15.8% of the head teachers in Mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District. This may be attributed this to lack of commitment from the government to implement the conventions and protocols that addressed gender issues. A study carried out in USA found out that its fruits were not as expected, since the percentage of female head teachers had barely risen. The policy failure was attributed to the fact that it was a quota filling and not half filling or 1:1 ratio (Makura, 2000). For instance, out of the 31 head teachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District in the year 2009 only 8(25.8%) were females while the rest 23(74.2%) were males. It is clear that while the affirmative action policy was introduced to empower females and as much as it had made some progress in increasing the number of the female head teachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District, the percentage was still below the recommendation. Thus there was need for the government to increase its ratio from 1/3 to 1:1.

Equal educational opportunity in Kenya had promoted both males and females to acquire the necessary skills required for employment, unlike in the past where females were denied formal education and given only instructions to enable them perform domestic tasks of raising children (Avalos, 2003), though the retention rate for females was low due to pregnancy, early marriages, early maturation, poverty, peer or parental pressure and cultural or religious pressure. This result implied that women's inadequate access to education influenced gender imbalance, which concurs with Afigbo(1991) and Caballero(2006) who found out that women's inadequate access to education had

been the source of the various discriminations that they suffer today. Thus there was need for the government to make free primary and secondary education compulsory to achieve its aims of education for all.

In-depth interviews also revealed that the government had introduced the policy of girl- mother re-entry to school, but unfortunately most of the head teachers were reluctant on the implementation of the policy because some of the girls got pregnant again; were mocked by other students thus hindering their meaningful learning or would influence other girls to get pregnant. DQASO revealed that head teachers in Vihiga district had been sensitized on the need for readmission of the girl- mother to their schools and had assisted the few cases that were reported to the office to join other schools. Thus there was need for the government to implement this policy to the later to save the girl child.

University education plays a crucial role in national development. DQASO and head teachers revealed that the lowering of cut off points for females was introduced by the government to enhance female representation at the university. This study found out that as much as the enrolment and growth in universities have been on the upward trend, the transition rate from secondary level to universities still remained low. This concurs with the findings contained in sessional paper No 1 (Government of Kenya ,2005). The female students constituted 32% of the total enrolment in public universities and 54% in private universities thus contributing to gender imbalance to a large extent. The number of male

graduate teachers in nearly all schools outnumbered the female graduates thus contributing to gender imbalance. Therefore, there was need for the ministry to implement the affirmative action in admission of girls and provision of grants and loans by the year 2015 to cater for the gender parity(Mackenzie, Sambili& Khayesi (1997) and Owen (1991) study found out that woman had a right to hold headship positions though their ascendancy was hampered by poor educational background, cultural beliefs and practices that favour men.

K.E.S.I training of teachers had influenced appointment of female head teachers greatly , because it had kept them abreast with the current issues and managerial skills to lead. But same teachers said that this training had contributed to gender imbalance because it depended on the individuals self determination since it was either sponsored by the school or the teacher thus many men unlike women attended in large numbers since they were aggressive and had time at their disposal.

Majority of the respondent indicated that equal promotional opportunities through interviews had contributed to the appointment of head teachers but failure to apply for the headship posts when they were advertised, or appear for the interview influenced gender imbalance. DQASO and head teachers in-depth interview revealed that some of the teachers never applied for the headship positions even if they qualified because they feared being posted to schools far away from their families or were content with their classroom teaching, thus contributing to gender imbalance in the appointment of head teachers in mixed secondary schools. It also revealed that others applied for the posts and were selected for the interviews but unfortunately failed to present themselves due to either sickness or delivery thus contributing to the gender imbalance. From the documents analysis and the DQASO in-depth interview it was revealed that in 2008 there were 57 applicants against the 5 vacancies that were available, 37males and 20 females applied. Out of which 15 males and 7 female were selected for the interviews and not all turned up. This concurs with (Brown, 1990) survey study which found out that on average, there was one female applicant for every 68 male application for the post of head ship.

It was also noted that not all the teachers who presented themselves for the interviews were willing to take up the posts as expressed by the current head teachers. The DQASO revealed that 3 individuals (Two females and one man) had declined to take up the position alleging that they were not worthy a promotion since they were either beginning schools or in remote areas and far from their homes or residential areas. Thus these chances were offered to other willing candidates irrespective of their sex. It was noted that in most cases the females are the once who declined to take up the leadership of schools in remote areas thus males took over their chances.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were made:

1. Ineffective implementation of government policy on affirmative action influenced gender imbalance in appointment of head teachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District;

2. Government directive of at least 30% of all public appointment be reserved for women influenced gender imbalance in appointment of head teachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District.
3. Partial implementation of the millennium development goals on women empowerment contributed to gender imbalance in appointment of head teachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga district;
4. Women inadequate access to education influenced gender imbalance in appointment of head teachers in mixed secondary schools.
5. Failure to apply for head ship posts when advertised or take up the posts when appointed influenced gender imbalance in appointment of head teachers in mixed secondary schools

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings, it is recommended that:

1. The government should strive to fully implement its policies on affirmative action and millennium development goals on women empowerment;
2. The government should increase the quota filling system to 1:1 ratio;
3. The government should promote the girl-child educational rights and awareness programmes to elevate women leadership; and,
4. Female teachers should be encouraged to apply for headship positions and should be appointed to the schools of their choice

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