

# **Gender Disparities in Education Administration and management; Causes and Coping Strategies by Female School Principals**

**Nickson Moseti Ongaki**

EMAIL: [nickson.moseti@gmail.com](mailto:nickson.moseti@gmail.com)

MOBILE: +254723944535/ +254202180624

## **Personal Biography**

My name is Nickson Moseti Ongaki. I am a Kenyan young academician who has made significant contributions to the studies of human resource management and business administration. I was born in Kisii highlands in 1982. I remained there as I grew up and was educated in public schools. In high school I made several outstanding innovations and inventions that I managed to present during Science Congress to national level. I decided to seek academic careers, against my family's wishes. Both went on to attend Moi University, pursued a career in academics, ultimately becoming a banker, and teacher. I initially sought a bachelor's degree in education. Later, I decided to become an entrepreneur. After graduation in 2005, I attended summer school and took a masters course in Business Administration. I enrolled at the Jomo Kenyatta University of science, Agriculture and technology as a PHD student. I became a part time lecturer at Mount Kenya University after receiving my master degree. I described myself as being self-conscious, inarticulate, and innovative in my classes. I'm proud to say this new role suits me. I'm driven, not to do great things for myself, but to spur my society on to even greater ones. I am married to Faith Wavinya; we have 2 children, Linnah and Amma.

## **ABSTRACT**

*There are indeed glaring gender disparities in representation at all levels of education administration in Kenya. It is worth noting that women the world over are still grappling with leadership both in education and the corporate world even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since independence, there has been gross under representation of women in Kenya in both political and other leadership spheres. The central problem of this paper is to highlight the causes behind the dismal representation of women in leadership positions in education management. The paper is based on a study which sought to find out the barriers perceived by women aspiring to climb the management ladder in the education sector in Mwingi district. The title of the study was "Barriers perceived by female secondary school*

*principals and their coping strategies". These barriers are akin to 'ceiling' preventing women from full participation in leadership. The specific objectives of the study were to identify the barriers hindering women principals and other women aspirants from full participation in education management and secondly, to find out the coping strategies they employ. The study used a descriptive sample survey design and sampled schools from the larger Mwingi District in Eastern province by use of stratified random sampling. Ten girls' boarding schools and five mixed schools headed by women principals were thus selected. The sample size of sixty-seven respondents comprised women principals, deputies (both male and female) women teachers and education officers' from the County Education Office. Instruments included an interview schedule for*



women secondary school principals and questionnaires for the rest of the respondents. The instruments were piloted in one school before their administration by use of test-retest procedure of Spearman rank order correlation and their validity was judged by a panel of my competent supervisors. Data analysis was done by use of SPSS after editing and coding. Percentages and frequency distribution tables were used to analyze data. Tables, charts and graphs were used to represent data. The study found out that women face some institutional, socio-cultural, political and personal barriers as they aspire to move up in education management. They have devised strategies such as aggression, assertiveness, participative leadership, teamwork, furthering studies and attitude change to mitigate against the perceived barriers. The study recommends policy revision such as; in the area of separating administrative work from boarding and accommodation of students to enable more women to seek administrative positions and still be able to attend to their women roles of motherhood and nurturing their families. The government should also consider appointing more women ministers for better representation and policy formulation in parliament. Establishment of children day care centers at remote areas will entice many women to take up leadership positions which they had earlier shunned. The Ministry of Education could also review the policy of headship of schools based on the gender of students to give women an even play ground for their upward mobility. This will in the long run increase gender parity in education; which is one of the key millennium goals in the Kenyan National Development Plan. This paper is like a wake up call to all stakeholders to provide an even playing ground for all gender from the basic levels to the higher echelons in the education sector.

## KEY WORDS:

Gender; Education; Disparities; Female; Mobility and Principal

## INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses gender under representation in education administration in Kenya. It is based on a research project conducted by the writer in the larger Narok county. The

project addressed barriers perceived by female secondary school principals and their coping strategies. The paper touches on some causes of gender disparities noted in the research and attempts to give a way forward in addressing the situation. It is worth noting that the quest for gender parity at all levels of education in Kenya may be difficult to achieve given the limited number of women administrators to mentor young girls. The paper draws vital data from the research project and gives viable suggestions of alleviating the glaring gender imbalance notable in the education sector in Kenya.

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Although women's status seems to have improved remarkably in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in many societies, women continue to lack access to power and leadership compared to men. These sentiments are echoed by Jones and George (2004), who assert that although there are more women in management positions today than a decade ago, there is a dismissal number in top and even middle management positions in most organizations. Crittenden (2001), decried the fact that when women advanced to top management positions, special attention often is focused on the fact that they are women. As such, women executives tend to face serious barriers on their way up the corporate ladder. Indeed, Ginzeberg (1998) felt that the 'glass ceiling' is real for women aspiring to be at the top in the U.S.A. He suggested that teamwork is needed by both male and female to 'crash' through this glass ceiling.

In the Kenyan scene, women have grappled with leadership in educational administration for a long time (Chelimo and Wosanju 2007). Women in Kenya still fall behind in leadership positions, a seemingly inherited barrier from our rich cultural heritage. The political arena in Kenya is no different, given that few women have been able to break through the male dominated and highly coveted August House (Pinto, 2007). Five lady politicians in Kenya have become famous partly because they do not fit into men's stereotypes about women (Ibid, 2007). Despite serious socio-cultural barriers, every election year in Kenya more women political aspirants surface (UNIFEM, 2007). This view appears to agree with that of Kariuki (2007), that leadership in Kenya has long



been a male terrain. This appears more pronounced in the education sector where there is a remarkably low number of women principals compared to male principals in the highest grades given on promotion basis (Barang'etuny, 1999).

There appears to be a serious under representation of women in educational management in Kenya. Amondi (2007) noted that, although most women workers at the MOE are holders of Med. or Bed Degrees, only 33.3% and 32.1% occupy top and middle management positions respectively. Goddard and Chrish (1997) echoed this view by asserting that only 15% of women in the primary education sector hold senior positions. This followed the observation that women form a majority in the teaching profession. Some of the issues related to this hard hitting revelation according to Goddard and Chrish (1997) is that, women tend to get immediate job satisfaction unlike their male counterparts who are motivated by financial rewards and higher career prospects. They further asserted that women leaders have a tendency to concentrate on creating a good working atmosphere and making a valuable contribution to those they lead at the expense of strategic management. Similar sentiments were voiced by Kabacoff and Peters (1998) in their research report on leadership and gender. They concluded that women leaders tend to be task oriented while men used the strategic approach in their leadership roles. Busolo (2007) also established in a study on leadership behaviour of school women head teachers that women teachers tended to use task-oriented styles of leadership. Women leaders in the Kenyan education management scene tend to concentrate on good performance and seem to derive satisfaction at just that. For example in the recent MOE restructuring, at least one of the top posts of Education Secretary could have gone to a top woman achiever. In future ministerial restructuring the government should be as gender sensitive as possible in their appointments.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

*The overall management of education in Kenya is executed by the Ministry of Education. The hierarchical structure of the MOE is divided into four parts: the headquarters at Jogoo House "B",*

*the eight Provincial headquarters throughout the country, the numerous district headquarters all over the country and the secondary school level. The management of secondary schools in Kenya is vested in the hands of Board of Governors (BOGs) at the school level. The BOGs manage secondary schools on behalf of the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and the school sponsors (Education Act 1980). To perform their duties better, the capacity of BOGs has been strengthened to include decentralized responsibilities of teacher management and support at the school level (MOEST circular 1999). BOGs are appointed by the Minister for Education to execute the following according to MOEST circular (1999):-*

- i) Preparing annual budget estimates for the school
- ii) Receiving grants, fees, subscriptions, donations and other revenue on behalf of the school
- iii) Incurring expenditure on various activities of the school in accordance with the school budget
- iv) Recruiting and hiring school employees including teachers on behalf of the TSC
- v) Paying employees salaries and determining the fees payable by the students
- vi) Ensuring the provision and proper utilization of school facilities and learning resources.
- vii) Ensuring effective and accountable use of school finances.
- viii) Ensuring sound school-community relationship.

Since the BOGs are not physically present in the school on a daily basis, the school principals execute the day to day running of the school.

## The role of school principals in secondary school management

School principals are by virtue of being secretaries to the BOGs members of the same. Their role is captured in six administrative task areas proposed by Campbell, Bridges, Corbally, Nystrand, and Ramseyer (1977):-

- i) Curriculum and instruction – this entails formulating objectives for the



school through time scheduling, ensuring proper schemes of work, lesson plans and evaluation procedures are prepared, supervision of curriculum instruction and safeguarding school records.

- ii) Pupil personnel – this entails admission of students, placing them in classrooms, dormitories, providing necessary school facilities, ensuring acceptable social behaviour, setting school rules and regulations and ensuring students safety and health.
- iii) Staff personnel – this involves carrying out a staff needs assessment, reporting staff shortages to the TSC, inducting new teachers, organizing staff training and development, appraising and recommending staff for promotions as well as providing a conducive climate at the school for all members.
- iv) Physical facilities – this includes provision of all the relevant physical facilities, ensuring their proper use and maintenance, authorizing and approving the purchase of all teaching –learning equipment in consultation with the departmental heads.
- v) Financial management – As the chief accounting officer for the school, the school principal collects fees, prepares budget estimates, monitors expenditure of school finances, ensures proper bookkeeping of all books of accounts, carries out internal auditing and presents books of accounts for external auditing.
- vi) School-community relations – As the public relations officer for the school, the principal markets the school to the surrounding community and vice versa. Principals further plan the amount and nature of school community contacts and evaluate their effectiveness.

Irrespective of their gender, school principals are expected to be competent in executing their duties along the above task areas. In the execution of their duties, school principals liaise with the

DEO's and PDE's offices which are part of the field services offered by MOE. The field officers report to the Education Secretary (ES) who is in charge of all professional matters of education in Kenya. Above the ES is the Permanent Secretary of MOE who is in turn answerable to the Minister for Higher Education who table's education matters in parliament. In the MOE hierarchy, there are very few women representatives, a notable example being the newly appointed Minister for Higher education. This scenario is replicated down the MOE hierarchy up to the school level where few women have become principals despite similar academic and professional qualifications to their male counterparts.

Women teachers form a majority in the noble teaching profession, yet very few are senior managers as Goddard and Chrish (1997) observed. The proportion of male teachers in the primary sector who are either heads or deputy heads is over 50%. Only 15% of senior positions are held by women. In secondary schools, the scenario is no better, given that there are fewer girls' secondary schools than boy secondary schools in the country. There are only eleven girls' secondary schools out of sixty one secondary schools in the larger Mwingi district. The situation is worsened by the policy that men should head boy schools and women to head girl schools. It is only recently when the MOE began promoting women to head mixed schools; amid sentiments that such women heads will not handle boys indiscipline cases as well as their male deputies. How then can more women raise to become school administrators in the face of limited outlets for school headship? The dismal number of women in education management was of great concern to the researcher because it is a pointer that the girl child would have no voice to champion her plight in the decision making organs of this nation. Moreover, with few women executives, few girls would attain higher education because of limited role models and mentors in education. It is due to this sad state of affairs that the paper seeks to unravel the barriers preventing more women access to top management. The concern of this paper is further to find out what strategies the women principals have come up with to cope with their perceived barriers.



## causes of gender imbalances in education administration

Ginzberg, (1998), was of the opinion that few women have managed to crash through the glass ceiling of the corporate world. Similarly, women are still grappling with leadership in educational administration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There appears to be invisible barriers to the upward mobility of women the world over. According to Gutner, (2001), women in USA were under represented on boards of directors, holding only 12 percent of the board seats in companies included on the standard and poorest 500 lists. He further asserts that because women control or influence nearly all consumer purchases, they should be adequately represented on such boards. The barriers to ascension to managerial positions for women are many and varied.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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further to find out what strategies the women principals have come up with to cope with their perceived barriers.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

1. To identify the main barriers hindering women secondary school principals from full participation in management positions in education administration.
2. To find out the strategies devised by the women-principals to cope with the perceived barriers.
3. To recommend ways of empowering more women to aspire leadership positions in education administration.

### SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN ASCENSION TO MANAGEMENT

Tradition attitudes towards gender equality are major culprits in barring women into elected office. In most cultures with traditional values concerning the role of women in the home and the family, many women may be reluctant to run, and if they seek office, they may fail to attract sufficient male and female support to win (Norris and Inglehart, 2007). Women therefore seem to face hostile attitudes whenever they aspire running for top political positions. One political aspirant in Kenya is quoted to have said.

“women seeking leadership positions should be courageous enough to withstand any obstacle that comes their way..... a woman leader ventures into a world that is not only dominated by men, but where many players are male chauvinists .....Daily Nation 6<sup>th</sup> November 1997, p.4)”

Therefore, stereotyping about women and what they can or cannot do seems to lock out many women aspiring leadership positions in politics as well as in educational administration. Glaser, (2007) echoes this view by asserting that gender based stereotypes continue to play part in decision making. In her view, a woman with a family may not be considered for an overseas position on the assumption that her husband would not leave his current job to join her. Women who recently have had children may not be considered for promotions because their priority is taken to be



their children. This sex stereotyping continues to bar competent women from climbing the management ladder.

African women in particular seem to be socialized early in life to accept the role of second-class citizens (Mang'oka, 1982). They hence internalize their role of nature and subservient care providers in their homes and families'. This often drains their energy which might otherwise be devoted to pursuit of leadership positions of consequences (Mang'oka, 1982). Moreover, the nature of managerial positions entails job rotation and geographical mobility which is often seem to create difficulties for a woman's child and a disruption of the husband's career. Gichuhi, (2007) further observed that, girls in most African ethnic communities were socialized to be an exact replica if their mothers;- obedient, submissive and devoted to their husbands and males in general. In short therefore, women have to battle with these ingrained ideas that their place is squarely in the 'kitchen'. Men on the other hand were trained to become warriors, superior and dominant in every aspect over women. Hence traditionally men are leaders, while women are submissive to male rule. This cultural orientation of the sexes has continued to determine managerial position occupants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Institutional barriers to women ascension to management**

These arise from the policies and practices governing recruitment, placement and promotion in various government institutions of power. There appears to be discriminatory policies to women's progress in organizations and companies. Grant (1988), noted that women deserved equal opportunity in early childhood as well as in higher education, and equal access to all types of jobs, training and development. If discriminatory policies are removed, women then would be able to compete with men for leadership positions and other senior jobs. Such policies seem to be ingrained in the Kenyan constitution, as implied by Achieng (1998) in an article on the history of women and gender in Kenya. She implied that women groups in Kenya were pressing for the recognition of women's rights in the constitution. Discrimination against women in personal decisions involving promotion, selection and

supervision were also rife in Kenya (Chelimo et al, 2007). Women principals in Kenya have therefore to battle with some policies such as women heading girls schools only. Until recently, most women principals had male deputies. Most communities around schools would also prefer male school principals to female ones. Hansot and Tyak (1981) give male dominance as another barrier to women progress. School leadership is often defined in masculine terms. Many principals are described as being 'stronger' and 'detached' while women counterparts are described as being "soft" and "emotional".

Women who ascend to power are seen as intruders to a male dominated world. Women leaders often suffer isolation and often have to contend with challenges emanating from parents and Boards of Governors. As Kariuki, (2007) observed, women who succeed in traditionally male fields are often judged as either competent or unfeminine, or incompetent and feminine. Limited mentorship is another barrier to women ascension to power. There is a dearth of men and women willing to mentor women (Engen, 2007). Men leaders tend to give female leaders lower rating than do other women and male subordinates and tend to have lower acceptance of female supervisors as role models (Javidan, 1995). Women seem to be their own enemies in leadership because rarely do they look up to their fellow women as mentors. This may be partly because of their traditional orientation to be submissive to male leaders and their husbands, but not to their fellow women (Gichuhi, 2007).

Limited opportunities of leadership also keep the number of women in top management low. Research shows that there are more boy secondary schools than purely girl schools in Kenya. Attesting to this is the district of the proposed study where out of 61 public schools, only 10 are girls' only schools. Women teachers may aspire to lead, but the few slots are already occupied and this may dampen their aspirations. Similarly, the posts in the MOE hierarchy right from the headquarters to the zonal levels seem to be purely a male domain.



Legislation and policies aimed at increasing women participation in education administration do not seem to be clear. There is therefore, need to come up with clearer rules to guide more women who aspire leadership positions in the limited places in the MOE hierarchy.

### **Political barriers to women ascension to management**

These emanate from the political climate prevailing in the area around the school and the country in general. As noted earlier, women political representation in Kenya is still not adequate, (Pinto, 2007). Few women have made it in politics and so there is no adequate 'voicing' of the plight of women in the August house. The Coalition of Violence Against Women (COVAW) is one body that was mandated to push for repeal of section of marriage, inheritance and ownership of property laws that discriminates on the basis of sex and the repeal of laws which condone harmful practices against women and girls such as FGM. Women groups such as COVAW are hence championing the recognition of women's rights'. According to Amnesty International, (1987), one of the fundamental human rights is that every human being has the right to take part in the government of his or her country and to vote or be vote for. It is surprising that in the just concluded general elections in Kenya, several women aspirants were assaulted because of their intention to vie for civic and parliamentary seats. The Infotrak Research and Consulting Company recent research on gender representation concluded that, Kenyan women felt unfairly treated by the society (Daily Nation March 8, 2008). According to the survey, 56% of women sampled are not fully satisfied with the way both the Government and civil society have been addressing gender issues. A further 56% of women felt that their workplace does not have gender inclusive culture and that women are treated less favorably by men in many ways, especially in training, development, recruitment and remuneration, appraisal and performance management as well as opportunities for job promotion. This is it self a pointer that one major barrier to women representation is the political representation. In the 10<sup>th</sup> parliament, women account for 10 percent, well below the 30% considered to be the critical mass of

influencing decision making aimed at improving the status of women (Ibid, 2007). Since important policies are deliberately in parliament, women representation will continue to bar many a woman a top management position.

At the school level, some women principals have had to content with civic and parliamentary male representatives in their community who are opposed to their administrative style. Research in education is rife with cases of school principals 'evicted' from certain schools because they do not have the local MP's blessings. This remains a real barrier to women ascend to top management.

### **Personal barriers to women ascension to management**

Personal barriers also seem to have a hand in inhibiting women from ascending to leadership positions. According to research, women are sometimes their own enemies in development. Few women look up to their fellow women as mentors. Javidan (1995) felt that women leaders tend to give female leaders lower ratings than do other women and male subordinates. Both sexes also seem to have a lower acceptance of female supervisors as role models. Hence, a dearth of women mentors and men willing to mentor women is an ever present threat to women participation in leadership. Goddard and Chris (1997) asserts that women tend to get job satisfaction faster than men and therefore they stop aspiring top leadership. They tend to concentrate in working hard to meet all their job obligations and gain approval of their bosses. He further indicated that women tend to lack assertiveness characteristic of male leaders, and whenever they became aggressive and confident, men tend to label them as abrasive and authoritarian.

A woman portrayal by the media also aggravates the situation. Women are seen as advertisement gargets and a woman picture accompanies every advertisement on a new car or a new electrical gadget. Hence whenever a woman ascends to leadership, male subordinates have a tendency to view their boss as a sentimental and not serious bargain. Women are hence often seen as 'soft' and 'emotional', men 'stronger' and detached (Harsot and Tyak, 1981).



The traditional orientation of women is another barrier to leadership positions. Outside their paid jobs, women often see themselves as in-charge of their families and their homes. This seems to satisfy them and at the same time drain their energy which they might otherwise devote to the pursuit of leadership positions of consequence (Mang'oka 1982). Job rotation and geographical mobility which are associated to managerial positions are seen by women as creating difficulties for their children and a likely disruption to their husband's careers. Hence women tend to resist management positions because they pose a risk to family stability. Women aspirants to the august house tend to be women who defy the odds and do not fit into Kenyans' sex stereotypes (Pinto, 2007)

### **COPING STRATEGIES**

In the face of impediments to leadership positions, women principals have to look for strategies to cope. Women who are aspiring for leadership must of necessity overcome childhood socialization which discouraged development of some essential qualities of leadership such as assertiveness. The popular perception of the maleness of leadership must also be overcome. Some of the strategies currently used by female executives include:-

#### **Participative Leadership Style**

Most researchers are of the view that women tend to employ participative style of leadership. This helps them to cope with subordinate stereotypes. Eagly and Johnson, (1990), hold the view that if a female manager tries to be more autocratic; subordinates are more likely to complain because they expect women to be participative. Mcshare and Glinow, (2000), hold the view that women are evaluated negatively when they adopt a directive leadership style which is stereotypically male. Women who aspire to the top should hence be participative in leadership behaviour while applying directive leader behaviour with caution. Women principals should involve their deputies and other subordinates in the decision-making process. Delegation of some duties will go along way to break subordinate stereotypes of women leadership.

#### **Transformational leadership style:**

As observed earlier in the study, women executives can borrow a leaf from Ellen M. Knapp

upon her ascension to power in 1992, (Crittenden, 201). Through transformational leadership, Ellen earned respect of her predominantly male co-workers. Through the creation of a vision, communicating the vision and building commitment to the vision, women leaders can remain afloat in a masculine leadership world. Research by various scholars points out that, women tend to be more transformational in leadership behaviour than their male counterparts. Using their intuitive power, women principals can transform secondary schools into centers of academic excellence. Most Kenyan girls' schools have great 'visions' and 'missions' displayed at their gates and major notice boards. School women principals are becoming transformational leaders and as attested by the top 100 category of schools in KCSE results of 2007, several girls' schools were in the top ten. (The Daily Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008). They are indeed becoming strategic managers of their schools and are as competent as their male counterparts.

#### **Task oriented leadership style**

According to research, males tend to be more task-oriented than women, while women tend to be more relationship-oriented. Powell, (1993), argues that there are real differences in leadership styles between male and female managers. Women tend to negotiate, mediate, facilitate and communicate tasks to their subordinates clearly. Research shows that this feminine style reduces hierarchy, satisfies subordinates and achieves results. Writers the world over now urge managers to adopt a caring, co-operative, collaborative, nurturing, connective and servant leadership style. Perhaps, this approach will work towards breaking the barriers to top management. Transformational leadership may be what the Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sir Leaf would employ to remain afloat in a country which had been decimated and devastated by horrendous crimes and human rights violations (Gutierrez, 2008). Ellen, being the first African woman president fought her way to the top and is indeed an inspiration to those seeking leadership which has to date remained a male domain the world over. Women school principals would indeed succeed if they clearly set the tasks to be accomplished within certain time frames.





## **Mentorship**

According to Okumbe (2001), mentorship is a close long-term work relationship between a senior manager and a subordinate. It implies 'coaching' a junior staff to acquire job competence required in a given profession. Women principals should therefore be mentors to young graduates entering the teaching profession. Similarly they should look up to other successful women leaders either in the political field or corporate world for mentorship. A notable example to be emulated is a woman CEO who recently joined the elite league of top CEOs to become one of the youngest managing directors in a leading company in Kenya. (Banda, March 9, 2008). Women aspirants to top management should look up to both male and female mentors as they climb up the corporate ladder. Perhaps they could enlist the help of mentorship programmes such as the one organized by Young Women Leadership Institute, (Olweny, 2007). Political leaders who are women should also be looked up as role models.

## **Assertive leadership**

As the contingency theory of leadership alludes to, leadership effectiveness depends on the situation. In the face of women discrimination based on gender stereotypes, women leadership can be embroiled with stress and anxiety. Subordinates may choose to refer a female administrator by name, while male counterparts are often addressed by title (Shakeshaft, 1989). There seems to be evidence that a number of women leaders tend to adopt an authoritarian model of leadership (Kariuki, 2007). Faced with the minor assaults of daily administration, female administrators may choose to be assertive or outright very authoritative (Ibid 2007). This observation is backed up by the fact leadership in the Kenyan political and corporate world is a male terrain and hence women principals naturally seek mentorship from authoritarian and aggressive political figures and business tycoons. FAWE, (1995) describes one school principal in Kenya as a ferocious fundraiser and an aggressive gate keeper in protecting girl children in Maasai land from early marriages. Perhaps women principals can borrow a leaf from this remarkable headmistress. However, there is need to apply each strategy under the dictate of situation and environment.

## **WAY FORWARD IN ENSURING MORE WOMEN PARTICIPATION**

To ensure that more women join leadership ranks in the ministry of education there is need for all the stakeholders to participate in the following:-

- i) Creating awareness on the need to educate more girls so that a 'pool' of professionals is created in the district.
- ii) Women becoming more aggressive and assertive in the application for advertised posts.
- iii) Holding forums for networking to brain storm on how to increase women representation in education administration.
- iv) The ministry becoming more gender sensitive by appointing more women as permanent secretaries, directors and even DEOs.
- v) A separation of financial management of schools from the management of boarding facilities would ensure that women can run schools without having to reside within the school hence allow them to maintain their family obligations.
- vi) A review of promotion guidelines to make the movement to the next grade timelier and use of meritocracy.
- vii) Up stepping in-service training for young graduates and practicing head teachers.
- viii) Scholarship programmes for women to advance their education in various fields in management.
- ix) Women to work hard to earn promotion based on merit.
- x) Women principals to recommend hardworking young graduates.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is indeed a 'glass ceiling' standing between women and leadership positions. Women tend to be barred from full participation in education management by male dominance, unfriendly policy guidelines, dearth of mentors, limited in-service training, and resistance from male colleagues, cultural stereotypes, gender



violence, and negative media portrayal among others. Teamwork, participative leadership, more assertiveness and furthering education may be worthy remedies to crash through this 'glass ceiling'. Women really need an attitude change to overcome barriers of their own making and avoid more lamentations on under representation.

The Ministry of Education needs to address the glaring gender imbalance right from the headquarters to the zonal levels. The TSC can also revise the promotion guidelines to make them more gender sensitive to ensure more women ascend the managerial ladder. At the school level, women teachers could network and encourage one another in the fight against under representation. They could perhaps start forums for mentoring young graduates and modeling for school girls to enhance attitude change towards leadership, which for many decades has been seen as a purely male terrain. The following are specific areas which the policy makers may use to enhance more women participation:

- i) The ministry should review some policies like the one on headship of schools based on gender of students to give women an even play ground for upward mobility.
- ii) A separation or appointment of boarding personnel to offer accommodation facilities may make more women take up promotions and at the same time attend to feminine obligation of child bearing and nurturing.
- iii) The requirement that one should attain at least a certain job group before promotion to leadership bars many a woman aspirant hence should be reviewed.
- iv) The government should establish day care centres at remote areas as a way of enticing many women to take up leadership positions while at the same time ensuring care for their children.
- v) Girl-child education should be up stepped through campaigns to enforce more women professionals in the future.
- vi) In-service training for new appointees to administrative posts is a matter of urgency in the district.
- vii) The ministry should increase the number of women representatives in the ministerial hierarchy from headquarters to the zonal levels.
- viii) A forum for mentoring young graduates should be initiated to create a pool for women professionals.
- ix) Scholarships from the ministry should target more women to ensure higher attainment of academic qualifications as a means of empowering women.

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