

Full Length Research Paper

Women aspiring to administrative positions in Kenya municipal primary schools

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Received 26 November, 2012; Accepted 30 July, 2014

Even though female teachers in Kenya municipal primary schools are majority and highly qualified, they fill fewer administrative positions than men. This study assesses the extent of women's participation in leadership positions, society's perception of female leaders, selection criteria of educational administrators, and barriers that affect or hinder them from participation in leadership positions. Findings of this study reveal that gender socialization, beliefs in meritocracy, and the influence of patriarchy create a cycle of discrimination that disadvantage women in career advancement. Further, the existence of gender barriers disproportionately harms women's advancement to senior positions of school administration. Finally, the study proposes remedial solutions to improve their involvement and participation in educational leadership.

Key words: Teachers, positions, primary schools.

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of educational opportunities in Kenya has contributed to the increased proportion of women entering the paid workforce. Women now have more varied career opportunities bringing about the "feminization" of semi-professions like teaching, social work, nursing and library science. As is the case in Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada the majority of teachers in Kenya municipal primary schools are female. Studies by Wilson (1997) in many developed countries, women form the highest proportion of elementary and secondary school teachers. Further up the educational ladder, the percentage of female teachers decreases, and are likely to be found teaching subjects traditionally considered feminine, such as home economics, literature, and art

(Weiler, 1995; Bell and Chase, 1993; Hoffman, 1981; Apple, 1986).

Although women represent the majority of teachers in these countries, they occupy the lower ranks of the profession and are generally controlled and supervised by men. It can be argued that the feminization of teaching has not meant more power or prestige for most women who are teachers. Women continue to be well represented in low-status teaching jobs, while men dominate the powerful positions of school management (Wilson, 1997; Regan and Brooks, 1995; Compton and Sanderson 1990; Acker, 1994). In Kenya, the notion that primary teaching is a suitable and most appropriate career for women has been gaining ground that today they make

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Table 1A. Teachers in Kenya municipal primary schools.

Municipal	Male teachers	Female teachers	Total	% Male teachers	% Female teachers
Nairobi	1789	3120	4909	36	64
Thika	550	914	1464	38	62
Mombasa	920	1050	1970	47	53
Nakuru	810	886	1696	48	52
Eldoret	450	668	1118	40	60
Kitale	151	307	458	33	67
Kisumu	700	950	1650	42	58
Total	5370	7895	13265	40	60

Table 1B. Deputy head teachers in Kenya municipal primary schools.

Municipal	Male deputy head teachers	Female deputy head teachers	Total	% Male Deputy head teachers	% Female deputy head teachers
Nairobi	143	57	200	71	29
Thika	41	27	68	60	40
Mombasa	62	53	115	54	46
Nakuru	44	39	83	53	47
Eldoret	39	33	72	54	46
Kitale	24	20	44	55	45
Kisumu	48	37	85	56	44
Total	401	266	667	60	40

up the vast majority of school teachers in municipal primary schools by a large margin, but when it comes to high-ranking school posts of administration, they are dominated by men. For instance, women constitute over 60% of the teaching staff in municipal primary schools (and over 50% of national populations), but fewer than 20% are administrators. The teaching profession in schools is characterized by a two-tiered system where women comprise 60% of the teachers, but only 42 and 45% of deputy head teachers and head teachers respectively (Ombati, 2009).

Statistical data as shown in Tables 1A, B and C indicate that in the municipal primary schools of Nairobi and Thika, women are equally represented in administrative leadership and teaching positions. In other municipalities, there are variations in the extent to which women are represented in headship with some municipalities practically matching that representation while others lag behind.

Women have made little progress in gaining leadership roles in these schools. The supervisory and administrative positions continue to be filled by men, many of who have little teaching experience. The discrimination against women in the teaching profession is a clear manifestation of bias that they experience in the labor force (Young,

2004). The lack of representation of women in school administration in Kenya means that the skills and qualifications they possess are not sufficiently utilized. Growing literature documents that female educational administrators tend to conduct more unscheduled meetings by others, be more consistent presence in the school, and keep more abreast of instructional programs than men (Riehl and Byrd, 1997; Adler, 1993; Powell, 1993). Women's leadership styles have been shown to be more transformational, participative, and inclusive than the leadership styles of their male counterparts. These qualities combine to create a leadership style that is inclusive, open, consensus building, innovative, collaborative, collegial and meticulous, according to Evetts et al. (1990). Women also bring to the exercise of leadership an arsenal of strengths, which increasingly are consistent with the current reform efforts in school leadership, governance, and instructional improvement (Eagly and Carli, 2000; Marshall, 1992).

Studies have identified emotional stability, extraversion (outgoing), openness to new experiences, agreeableness and conscientiousness as traits that make women more suited for leadership than their male colleagues (Tallerico and Blount, 2004; Marshall and Olivia, 2005). Despite these attributes, women are less likely than men to be

Table 1C. Head teachers in Kenya municipal primary schools.

Municipal	Male head teachers	Female head teachers	Total	% Male head teachers	% Female head teachers
Nairobi	130	70	200	65	35
Thika	38	30	68	56	44
Mombasa	60	45	105	57	43
Nakuru	43	40	83	51	49
Eldoret	37	35	72	51	49
Kitale	25	19	44	57	43
Kisumu	45	40	85	53	47
Total	378	279	657	57	43

Source: Unpublished statistical reports from the municipal primary schools of Nairobi, Thika, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kitale and Kisumu 2000/ 2001.

recruited to run for administrative positions, are more likely to be discouraged from running, and are less likely to consider themselves “qualified” to run—even though they are qualified as male candidates. The dearth of women in educational leadership roles—and in whole fields—creates the perception that they do not belong to positions of prominence and power. Therefore, this study examines the barriers that female/women encounter to reaching their full potential in administrative positions in Kenya municipal schools. The study also suggests possible strategies that can enhance women’s equal access and full participation in leadership positions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted at the municipal primary schools of Nairobi and Thika in Kenya to determine obstacles that prevent women from advancing to administrative positions. This qualitative study used interviews with head teachers, deputy head teachers, female teachers and Ministry of Education personnel. Pseudonyms have been used to conceal the identity of the institutions and persons interviewed. Focus group was also conducted on purposively chosen individuals to seek clarification on issues that had arisen during the interviews. Analysis of documents and statistics was done to provide descriptive illustration of women’s participation in teaching and administrative positions.

The study findings reveal that women’s representation in school administration is still far from proportionate to their representation in the teaching force. The lack of proportional representation in management position is rooted in the workplace culture that defines who is an appropriate candidate for administrative position, the belief that women are inherently unsuited to administrative work due to their early socialization, workplace culture, lack of women mentors and family commitments conflicting with job. However, before presenting the results in detail, selection criteria used to recruit candidates to leadership positions are examined.

Selection of head teachers or principals

Public schools in Kenya are managed by a head teacher or the principal and are assisted by one or more deputy head teachers or principal according to size. These groups are responsible for

supervision of education in their respective schools. These positions ideally are filled by teachers advancing within the administration. Traditionally, qualified candidates seeking these positions apply and are interviewed by the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) or agents of the organization a vacancy. Although promotion procedures to senior positions are in theory clear and gender neutral, evidence and informal conversations with women teachers suggest otherwise. Those interviewed for the study indicated that the selection or promotion procedures to senior positions in Kenya public schools are carried out in an ad-hoc manner and seem to be dictated by whim, favoritism, lobbying and other unclear methods. The promotion procedures clearly were subject to abuse because it was not surprising to find administrators with little experience. Perhaps this could explain why some women teachers lamented.

Miss Kibe: Hiring to high positions is based on whom you know rather than what you know in school management (Teacher, Guka Primary School in Thika).

Miss Amina: Most heads are known to have secured their appointments due to the influence of “tall relatives.” This system is rotten. I am just a classroom teacher yet some kids I taught the other day are head teaches (Teacher, Milima Primary School in Nairobi).

When educational officers for Nairobi and Thika were questioned about the criteria used in promoting teachers to head teachers, they seemed to indicate that promotion procedures were not spelt out to ensure promotion of qualified candidates in a transparent manner.

Mr. Farah: Appointment to some positions like deputy or head teacher is subject to availability. However, there are no clearly spelled procedures to ensure that a qualified teacher is promoted at the right time (Municipal Education Officer at Thika)

Mrs. Muna: The procedures we rely on to appoint head teachers are defective. They are subjective and encourage nepotism and corruption (City Education Officer at Nairobi).

When asked to account for their promotion, head and deputy teachers offered contradictory responses.

Mrs. Hamisi: Those who are complaining with the way head teachers are appointed do not understand that on top of academic qualification and teaching experiences criteria such as accepted by the community, conduct and personality matter (Headmaster, Hania

Primary School in Thika).

Mr. Guda: I was appointed through the right channels to this position. The Kenya Union of Teachers could be making a lot of noise if appointments were not Transparent (Deputy, Njema Primary School in Nairobi)

Mrs. Were: I have distinguished administrative experience having served as a deputy and classroom teacher for a long period of time. However, there is a lot to be desired in the way appointment is done (Headmistress, Merinda Primary School in Nairobi).

Mrs. Mugo: Mediocre people have been appointed due to loyalty and kickbacks. I know some of them (Headmistress, Kago Primary School in Thika).

Mr. Murungi: You will be surprised to find out that without the "invisible forces" some of us would not be where are. Some of us in these positions will not agree that the system is rotten (Deputy, Bendera Primary School in Thika).

According to Eshiwani (1993) and Maranga (1993), candidates recruited to the headship position do not need to take a formal management course. Irrespective of gender, an effective classroom teacher of considerable experience should automatically be considered fit for appointment as a headmaster or headmistress without undergoing any kind of formal training in the field. The way in which promotion is made in Kenya decimates against women based on sex, marital status, and having young children to care for. Studies have established that many women attempting to transition to leadership positions face hidden barriers that make senior position difficult to attain (Young, 2004). For example, women may not understand the need to position themselves for promotion by taking on responsibilities in their schools, volunteering for activities, and seeking the advice and patronage of senior administrators, instead may believe that academic qualifications and extended service will be enough (Marshall, 1992; Coleman, 2001; Young and McLeod, 2001).

When asked why teachers aspire to senior positions in school administration, teachers provided these responses:

Mrs. Lado: When one is promoted to be a head teacher, he /she get a salary increase that goes with that position (Teacher, Kiboko Primary in Thika).

Miss Mzee: Headships in Kenya area source of affluence. Heads fleece schools. I have yet to see a school head that looks miserable. It is a position with great benefits (Teacher, Simba Primary School in Nairobi).

Mr. Owino: We are a power unto ourselves. We exercise our power not only on those we control but also we have a big say on what goes on local politics (Headmaster, Malaika Primary School in Nairobi).

Mrs. Mwenda: Headship means power. It means being the chief decision-maker. You also gain recognition for what you are doing (Headmistress, Mogumo Primary School in Thika).

These responses confirm the view that the position of a school administrator is a source of power, prestige, status and greater monetary rewards. Since school administrative positions represent the logical step for upward career mobility, the positions are attractive and many teachers aspired to obtain them. According to Shakeshaft, administration's benefits are not only limited to pecuniary rewards (1993). School administration is a source of

recognition, respect and authority, as well as the opportunity to have a greater voice in decision-making. In addition, for many teachers, the chance to "escape" the classroom may be the most attractive reward that administration has to offer. However, those recruitment procedures disproportionately favor men seeking senior administrative positions that carry the most responsibility and influence and highest salaries (Grogan and Brunner 2005; Shakeshaft, 1993).

RESULTS

Bias and discrimination

Although women have taken great strides professionally and socially, they are often subtly and consistently denied full access to the same opportunities as men. Overt discrimination, reliance on false and negative stereotypes, and subconscious bias have prevented women in Kenya municipal primary schools from obtaining fair treatment in hiring, evaluations, and promotions in employment. Much as laws have been passed to provide equal opportunities at the workplace, women still hit a lower glass ceiling than men. Discrimination in the workplace comes with many different faces. In its most basic form, it involves outright exclusion of women, based solely on gender. Women have been largely excluded from "good old boys" networks traditionally of individuals who hold power in an organization (Wit, 1990; Compton and Sanders, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1989). The presence of a "good old boys" network may encourage action (i.e., actively and deliberately providing information and assistance to males in the network regarding job opportunities), or inaction (i.e., actively and deliberately withholding vital information from women that keeps them outside the political "knowledge" loop). It also may result in a form of complicity (i.e., awareness that there are forces at work that benefit certain individuals with no steps taken to challenge or interrupt them). As a consequence, if a "network" exists (which may be largely hidden, but have visible effects), it may serve as a disincentive and keep those on the outside (mostly women) from entering or trying to advance in leadership. Women are often at a disadvantage in penetrating these powerful networks because informal meetings happen in secretive "locker rooms" beyond their reach. In the United States, for example, studies have noted that as a result of networks, whether real or imagined, women believe that they have little chance for advancement into administration. Brown and Ralph have noted that such exclusionary practices have discouraged women from aspiring to positions of leadership because they believe that it is sponsorship more than ability that matters (1996). Davidson and Cooper also suggest that certain established traditional male institutions have developed exclusively male customs and traditions that perpetuate the "good old boys" networks and safeguard them from female intrusion (1992). Ozga observes the exclusion of women from these networks because of the

difficulties associated with breaking into them (1993). The interviewees spoke of the exclusively “male bonding” that takes place after work hours, during sporting events, and in clubs and bars. In these meetings, male managers conduct significant amount of business and made useful amount of contacts; women, however, are excluded are from these meetings and the associated benefits.

Discrimination against women in the wage economy in Kenya goes back to the establishment of colonial rule. Through colonization, capitalism intervened in the existing social economic order. One of the consequences of the new system was that the value of traditional women's labor was reduced considerably because the home and the work place were separated. The state and industrial concerns reserved most urban wage labor for men. From then on, women were controlled in two ways. They were controlled through traditional means in rural areas, but also now through the colonial laws that determined that women had no rights to the ownership of land or control over the produce they cultivated.

Several aspects of the study reveal that women have a harder time becoming senior teacher, have fewer support structures, and do not fit the “image” of leadership, all of which have a negative impact on their ability to advance. Discrimination against women in education and employment has resulted in the establishment of a legacy that has not been easy to overcome. According to the view of some members in the focus group discussion, integrating women into leadership will require the following:

Miss. Rutto: Vacant leadership positions ought to be made known. This is the most perfect method of attracting potential candidates. Also, fair procedure for selecting eligible candidates should be established (Deputy Headmistress, Nyota Primary School in Nairobi).

Mr. Kamau: There is a need to develop good policy guidelines that are based on academic and professional qualifications, experience, job performance, discipline, public relations and professional qualifications. Women should also be represented in the selection process (Headmaster, Ngazi Primary School and KNUT Executive Secretary of Nairobi Branch).

Mrs. Mwenda: Teachers need to be constantly evaluated to ascertain their competence in handling administrative tasks. Evaluation tests, which would keep teachers keep abreast with professional competencies and development, are ideal. This could also provide additional criteria for promotion (Headmistress, Kago Primary School in Thika).

Mrs. Muna: The Education Ministry through the inspectorate unit should also streamline inspections of teachers to keep records of the performance of teachers in the field with a view of making recommendations for promotions. The inspectors need to be given resources to visit schools

and see what really happens in the classrooms and gauge teachers' abilities. There is also a need for the Ministry of Education to formulate a fair method of establishing teachers' abilities beyond relying on the head teacher's recommendations.

One can deduce from these responses that a considerable amount of change must occur if women are to have equal opportunities in leadership in Kenya. The Ministry of Education and Teachers' Service Commission of Kenya needs to establish guidelines for the selection and promotion of school administrators. According to Miss Rutto and Mr. Kamau, standards and criteria for promotion should be a matter of public knowledge and should allow for the broad participation of various groups in decision-making. Mrs. Muna and Mrs. Mwenda suggest the need for clear strategy to promote deserving teachers and to ensure that high standards are maintained in the profession.

Socialization

The absence of women in administrative positions in schools can also be attributed to their socialization. Gender socialization, which in Kenyan societies starts from birth and continues into adulthood for both boys and girls, prepares children for adult roles as wives [in the case of the girls] and male heads of households [in case of the boys]. As children age, their gender roles or differences grow. While boys learn to eschew the domestic arena, and girls are taught the public spheres not their rightful place. The women interviewed in this study capture these differences.

Mrs. Lado: I grew up knowing that women cannot move far from their home in search of work because they have the primary responsibility for caring for children and for performing most of the household chores (Teacher, Kiboko Primary School in Thika).

Miss Mukami: Well, let me put it this way, the girls who grow up boasting and arguing like boys, they get themselves a really bad name. You are discouraged from being independent minded because that is a trait of boys (Teacher, Milima Nairobi Primary School in Nairobi).

Mrs. Sinda: The children of these days are so different from our days. My daughter always argues with me why she should be the one doing everything and her brother does nothing. If the brother helps, well, it is all right, but if he is outside playing around with his friends, she gets pissed if I keep asking for her hand again and again. She engages the brother in soccer a competition something- I could not dream doing at her age (Teacher, Ngazi Primary School in Thika).

The traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding the role and status of women in society are still prevalent; making it difficult for women to disengage from the cultural and traditional requirement least they get ostracized. The gender demarcation and differentiation of lines of work are obvious in the organization of most schools where girls and boys are assigned different responsibilities. In Thika and Nairobi schools, it was observed that domestic related duties such as sweeping the classroom, cleaning, picking up garbage or handing out books and supplies were mostly assigned to girls. In contrast, boys were assigned responsibilities that necessitated a measure of authority or control. These tasks included monitoring the classrooms, taking roll call, running errands for the teachers, and serving in some kind of leadership roles such as prefects or head boys. One can argue that the way in which responsibilities are assigned in Kenyan schools causes students internalize the assumption that the girls' primary roles and ambition are to be wives and mothers while boys are to be leaders.

By the time children reach adulthood, they have already experienced so many instances of gender discrimination and inequality, that most of them take it as a "normal" part of life. The socialization to which girls are subjected causes them to lower their educational and occupational expectations, which explains why they end up being confined to the private sphere with diminished accesses to public life and leadership positions. Bem (1993) points out that not only do cultural expectations for masculine and feminine traits differ but, they are at polar opposites; masculinity is associated with action, decisions and strength, whereas femininity is associated with passivity, fragility, and vulnerability (1993). As authority and decisiveness are traits associated with leadership, it follows that men are often viewed more positively as leaders than women. Women are usually pressured into becoming complacent. Interviews with education officers in Nairobi and Thika municipal councils revealed that most female teachers never struggle to get promoted. "They waited to be looked at whenever a chance arose," said Mr. Farah Olade, Education Officer Thika. For example, Miss Misoi of Vitabu Primary School in Nairobi thinks that the men in her school ought to apply first for headships before she does. She said, "In my thinking, men are the ones who need to be head teacher first. For me, time is not ripe to start imagining headship responsibilities."

Perhaps the societal expectations of how women will behave as administrators led some senior female school administrators to complain that they were given fewer chances to make mistakes than men, especially during the early days of their appointments. They noted that the novelty of their gender wears off after a year or two, when the "Amazons" (nickname for headmistresses in Nairobi) prove the doubting Thomases wrong by being effective administrators.

Mrs. Mwenda: You know very well that few women are running schools. You attend meetings where people do not even realize there is a woman there until much later. I have been addressed as 'mister' and it takes long time to be addressed appropriately (Headmistress, Mogumo Primary School in Thika).

Mrs. Were: I have encountered a lot of prejudice during my career as the head teacher. I can recall being mistaken many times as the secretary. People come to my office asking if I can allow them to see the headmaster. An interesting encounter is when somebody found me seated in the reception area and thought that I was the headmaster's wife waiting for him to come out (Headmistress, Merinda Primary School, Nairobi).

Mrs. Ochieng: It is sometimes seen as inconceivable for a woman to be a head teacher. Questions of how you will be able to enforce discipline (among other things), more especially to the male students, who are seen as the most difficult group of students to deal with, are asked (Headmistress, Suswa Primary School in Nairobi).

The conclusion that one can draw from these responses is that management structures in Kenyan schools are not gender neutral. School administrations at all levels reinforce the "great man" model that women have to confront in order to become administrators. The "great man" model often portrays leaders as heroic, mythic, domineering, authoritative and assertive. The "great man" model is an intractable obstacle for women seeking positions of influence because of the mismatch between the qualities traditionally associated both with women and leadership. That is why when a woman becomes a leader, she is expected by society to fail, thus "proving" that women are incapable leaders (Tallerico, 2000; Coleman, 2001; Gupton and Slick, 1996). According to Marshall, the self-fulfilling prophecy" on part of the society labels women as failures (1992). "We know she is incapable. Let's just see how she goes about failing," said Mrs. Mugo of Kago Primary School when she was appointed as the Headmistress of General Kago Primary in Thika. Meanwhile, men, who are associated with attributes of physical strength, readily given the right to command, control and manage schools (Marshall and Kasten, 1994; Skrla, 2001). The very same behavior, then, can serve to enhance the esteem in which men are held, and diminish the esteem held for a woman. According to Mrs. Tonga, Deputy Head Teacher of Lima Primary School in Nairobi, "...not many of us dream of becoming school heads given the double standard by which we are judged."

Society continues to rate men higher than women on most of the qualities associated with leadership. What is assertive in a man seems abrasive in a woman, and female leaders risk seeming too feminine or not feminine enough. On the one hand, they may appear too "soft"-

unable or unwilling to make the tough calls required in positions of greatest influence. Those imitating the "male model" are often viewed as strident and overly aggressive or ambitious. Women in most cultures are expected to be compassionate, nurturing, and to put their own needs aside on a regular basis. If a woman is not compassionate and adopts masculine behavior, she is considered a bad woman. Studies have confirmed that women are rated lower as leaders when they adopt authoritative seemingly masculine styles, particularly when the evaluators are men, or when the role is one typically occupied by men.

Since men have dominated leadership positions for many years, "society's views of the characteristics of effective leaders" often align with traditionally male characteristics, explained Mrs. Mugo, the Headmistress of Kago Primary Primary, Thika. She was of the view that educational officials do not associate character traits that are mostly possessed by women with strong leadership ability and therefore do not encourage women to pursue leadership opportunities. Zeda, the Headmaster of Baraka Primary School in Thika was of the opinion that school administrations at all levels-reinforced the male-centered bias that women who could make great leaders "did not even see themselves in a particular role" and will pursue leadership positions.

Absence of role models

Women are highly visible as teachers of young children. However, as children progress to higher educational rungs, the percentage of female teachers' decreases (Wilson, 1997; Weiler, 1995). The invisibility of women as role models to older students can be accounted for by a number of structural problems. These include high levels of illiteracy among women, lack of self-confidence, negative societal attitudes towards women in leadership and the lack of resources to seek office. In the top decision-making levels of the public and private sectors, women are greatly underrepresented. The invisibility of women in top decision levels prompted Miss Kibe, of Guka Primary School in Thika to lament.

"In and out of the home, it is a man's world; they dominate the political field; they dominate the organized economic field; they dominate the church; they dominate the military; they dominate the civil service - no wonder there is so much talk about women empowerment."

The under representation of women in senior positions in the Ministry of Education illustrates the general extent to which women are excluded from its decision-making positions (Table 2).

The United Nations Development (UNDP) Human Development Report (Table 3) indicates that Kenya's performance with respect to women's participation in

leadership or politics in the African region in 1998 was dismal even when compared with countries such as Ethiopia and Rwanda emerging from conflict and war. Research studies have established that under-representation of women in decision-making positions has denied other women sufficient role models (Adler et al., 1993; Pigford and Tonnsen, 1993). There is no doubt that without the presence of a sufficient number of successful women in administrative positions, women might assume that only truly exceptional females can assume leadership roles.

It may be argued that women lack the patience to walk the long and narrow path to administrative positions."With the struggle you have to be involved in before becoming a head, sometimes it is pointless to waste all your time fighting for what you might not be. Many of us are just content with what we are," Mrs. Mate of Ngata Primary School in Nairobi remarked, for example.

The few women who enter into school administration face problems of isolation and loneliness. Female head and deputy head teachers lament.

Mrs. Were: In this position, the worst compliment one can get is to be totally ignored. If you're not strong enough, you could suffer an inferiority complex as a result of being ignored completely, especially on account of being a woman (Headmistress, Merinda Primary School in Nairobi).

Mrs. Mugo: Sometimes you may feel lonely. But, at the same time, being a woman headmistress, it can be a privilege and an advantage if you use it in the right way. You are more conspicuous and, therefore, you can get easier access to the people you need to work with (Headmistress, Kago Primary School in Thika).

When asked to give suggestions as to how the number of women in administrative positions could be increased, the respondents suggested affirmative action. "Deliberate efforts such as setting aside some vacancies for women need to be introduced if women were to advance to leadership," Mrs. Chege of Lena Primary School suggested. Mr. Zeda, Deputy Headmaster of Jamuhuri Primary School, also supported the application of affirmative action as a way of getting women into school management. But the Thika Municipal Education Officer, Mr. Farah, and Miss Mukami of Primary Nairobi School opposed the use of affirmative action. "Affirmative action will water down the academic and professional promotion standards because women will be favored," Mr. Farah said. Affirmative action has often been mistaken to mean, among others things, promotion of mediocre people on the basis of their ethnicity, gender, creed and geographical location. Miss Mukami, for example, was of the opinion that unfair privileging will place wrong people in positions for which they are not qualified. However,

Table 2. Representation in senior positions in the Ministry of Education.

Administrator	Male	Female	Total	Female %
Permanent Secretary	1	0	1	0.0
Deputy Secretary	4	0	4	0.0
Undersecretary	3	0	3	0.0
Senior Assistant Secretary	3	0	3	0.0
Total	11	0	11	0.0
Professional	Male	Female	Total	Female %
Director of Education	1	0	1	0.0
Senior Deputy Director of Education	4	1	5	20.0
Deputy Director of Education	17	2	19	10.5
Assistant Director of Education	53	19	72	26.4
Senior Education Officer	66	18	84	21.4
Total	141	40	181	22.1

Source: "Kenya National Scorecard 1998: Indicators of Development in Education." Prepared by Forum for African Women Educationist Kenya Chapter- FAWEK, 1999.

Table 3. Women participation in leadership and politics in African region.

Country	Government leaders %	Ministerial level %	Sub-ministerial %
Kenya	6.9	0	8.8
Uganda	11.2	13.2	9.8
Tanzania	11.8	12.9	11.1
Rwanda	14.5	5.0	20.0
Ethiopia	13.7	5.0	16.0
Sierra Leone	10.0	9.1	10.5
Namibia	15.6	8.3	16.5
South Africa	15.6	14.8	15.9

Source: UNDP. Participation of Women in Leadership and Politics in African Region. The United Nations Development Human Development Report 1998.

affirmative action guarantees women protection from inherent discrimination and ensures their realistic participation in school administration. All this begins with revisiting the education system. If it was colonial education that set in motion social disparities and practices, then it should be post colonial education, which should reverse negative perceptions. It is by reviewing the education system that the needs of the African woman may be realized. Mrs. Chege of Lena Primary School also suggested that affirmative action programs are necessary if the number of women in school administration is to increase.

In countries such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, affirmative action measures and preferential treatment of women have resulted in an increased number of women in administration. In these countries, women account for 30 to 40 percent of the

parliamentarians. This has been known to bring about substantial changes in employment policies that are beneficial to female workers (Wilson and Iles 1999). In Portugal, the rotational program, in which management positions rotate around different school positions has served to improve women's chances of permanent promotion into those positions

According to Gituto and Kabira, embracing affirmative action policies can increase women's participation in political parties, trade unions and civil society organizations (1999). A number of countries that surround Kenya have adopted affirmative action policies to some extent. For example, in Uganda and Mozambique, governments or ruling parties reserve 30 percent of the seats in the national, regional and local assemblies for women. Lessons can be learned from these countries if substantial changes are to be introduced in Kenya. But

inasmuch as the constitutions of Mozambique, Ethiopia, South Africa and Uganda all provide for equal rights for men and women, as does the current Kenyan constitution these provisions are contradicted by concessions to customary law, the perpetuation of highly discriminative civil and penal codes, religious laws and the absence of family laws among other legal measures (1990, 1993, 1995).

Work-family demands

Women face difficulties in employment because in many developing economies, they are generally responsible for domestic duties including caring for children and elderly relatives, taking care of the household, gathering water and firewood, and tending to the family garden, among other daily chores. Studies on women in leadership suggest that women find themselves torn between enormous demands of administration and societal expectations for women in terms of family responsibilities (Tanaka, 1995; Young and McLeod, 2001). This tension is in part the result of a gender norm, which values men at work (the breadwinner) and women at home (the caregiver). The result is that women, much more than men, must figure out how to balance family responsibilities and make choices about what will be "given up" in order to pursue leadership positions. The responses below reveal how family responsibilities adversely affect women in their careers.

Mr. Owino: I have tremendous respect and regard for women. I have said many times that I would not want to be a woman if there was such a thing as re-incarnation. I would love to be a man all over again! (Headmaster, Mailaika Primary School, Nairobi).

Mrs. Mwakisa: Between a program to be attended and my family, they get the first preference. It is very hard work attending to two obligations at the same time. You cannot give 100 percent of your input to both (Teacher, Jimbo Primary School in Nairobi).

Mrs. Kaburi: Children, husband, and illness. Too much work and not enough time to think and dream of anything. The physical and emotional demands of my family have to be attended to first (Teacher, Mugo School, and Thika).

Mrs. Ochieng: The nature of school leadership is such that it extends well beyond official working hours. Few women are able to justify their spouses and families why they need to be away from the safety and comfort of their homes well after 4:00 p.m. (Deputy Headmistress, Suswa Primary School in Nairobi).

The responses reveal that the combined responsibilities

of family and career are a challenge and a disadvantage to women. Mrs. Were, Headmistress at Merinda Primary School in Nairobi, for instance, had to wait until her children were grown before venturing into a headship. Mrs. Ochieng of Suswa Primary School recalls how she often shortcuts staff discussions and demanding assignments so that she can rush home and attend to the family. The strict division of labor commonly observed in most parts of Africa causes women to concentrate more on family matters than their career. "My position is not easy; it requires a high level of flexibility and long hours that often stretch into evening. Most times, I leave the office without completing my assignment to attend to my spousal responsibilities," said Mrs. Mwenda of Mogumo Primary School in Thika. Perhaps a day in the life of the Murungis' (a teacher couple) in Bendera Primary School in Thika Municipality of Kenya and a South African female teacher illustrated how women are confronted with concurrent responsibilities (Table 4).

The observation of Mrs. Mwakisa of Jimbo Primary School in Nairobi demonstrates the challenges faced by many women who have to maintain a balance between responsibilities at home and at work. With a bag full of books, 45-year-old Mrs. Mwakisa, a mother of five returns home from school at 5:00 pm. Meanwhile her husband Mr. Mwakisa, a teacher in the same school, stays back and attends to assignment until 6:00 pm. He then heads straight to a local pub to lounge with friends. When he comes home, he expects the wife to have attended to the family routine, and completed the household chores. Mrs. Mwakisa rarely learns current affairs, except through her husband. She rarely listens to the radio nor has time to read the daily newspaper, let alone finish the assignments she carries from school on time. It is as if the newspaper and radio are the property of the husband. The scenario may play out slightly differently elsewhere, but the basic observation of the double burdens borne by women with careers is similar across the various parts of the country. There is no doubt that the double burdens borne by women are an opportunity cost in their career work and progression to higher positions.

Mrs. Sinda: My children are sick. I cannot report to work; my husband is sick, I have to attend to him; the maid goes without notice, I miss report or come to school late and leave early. Poor woman! Who bothers to know my contribution to the family? (Teacher, Ngazi Primary School, Nairobi).

Mr. Farah: When a woman is still at the age of child bearing and nursing, promoting her to headship is inviting problems. Soon you will be receiving excuses that I cannot attend school because of sickness in my family, the maid has left, and other related excuses (Municipal Education Officer, Thika).

Mrs. Lado: Women are more affected by home and family

Table 4. Time spent in career and family responsibilities.

Time	South African woman teacher	Kenyan female teacher	Kenyan male teacher
3:30 a.m.	I wake up and study	Asleep	Asleep
4:30 a.m.	I make fire and warm water for my husband and children	Asleep	Asleep
5:00 a.m.	I start cleaning the house and sweeping the yard	I wake up; light the stove, warm water for my children and husband.	Asleep
5:30 a.m.	I wash the children and also wash myself	I prepare children for school (e.g. washing and dressing them)	I wake up, take a bath and dress
6:15 a.m.	I make breakfast for my family	Making breakfast for the family	I take breakfast
7:00 a.m.	We have breakfast	I see children off to school.	I leave for work
7:25 a.m.	I dress the children	I clean the house and utensil	At work
8:05 a.m.	The children and I walk to school	I soak clothes and attend to my chicken	At work
8:30 a.m.	School starts and continues until 2:00 p.m	I take a bath, dress and go to work	At work
2:00 p.m.	I do the following day's work, i.e. marking children's homework and making preparation for the following day, until 3:30 p.m	I come back home, check and feed my chicken, have lunch and go back to school	At work
3:25 p.m.	I walk back home and arrive 4.00 p.m.	I go back to work	At work
4:15 p.m.	Wash the dishes we used for breakfast.	I come back from school, wash clothes and go to get my children from the bus stage	At work
4:30 p.m.	I make fire and prepare supper	I help my kids with their homework and attend to my kitchen	I am at the social place
7:00 p.m.	We have supper	Prepare dinner	At social place.
7:30 p.m.	I wash the dishes	I have dinner and wash utensil	I arrive home and have dinner
8:00 p.m.	I wash the children	I prepare children to go to bed	I watch T.V. and look at the day's newspaper
8:35 p.m.	I help the children with schoolwork	I attend to my schoolwork, mark student papers	I do my job assignment.
9:30 p.m.	We go to bed	I warm water for my husband's bath	I take bath and retire to bed
10.00 p.m.	Asleep	I take bath and retire to bed	Asleep

Source: Modified from Davies, L., (1996). *Teacher Education: Gender and Development: Global Perspective of Teacher Education.* " in Oxford Studies in Comparative Education.

responsibilities than men. We cannot be flexible as men; this counts in promotion (Teacher, Kiboko, Primary School, and Nairobi).

Women are more likely to take on greater responsibilities for their families, taking parental and dependant-care leave, spending more time with the children and performing household tasks. This also has a significant influence on career development for women. When there is a promotion to a headship, men are likely to be the beneficiaries (Skrla, 2001; Brown and Ralph, 1996; Hunter, 1993; Loder, 2005). Dual responsibilities make women, but not men, appear less competent and less available to meet workplace responsibilities. The term "working father" is rarely used and carries none of the

adverse connotations of "working mother."

Women experienced more tension between the time demands of job and their family responsibilities. They find themselves torn between enormous demands of administration and societal expectations for women in terms of family responsibilities (Coleman, 2001; Loder, 2005; Reskin and Padvic, 1994). This tension is in part the result of a gender norm, which values men at work (the breadwinner) and women at home (the caregiver). The result is that women, much more than men, must figure out how to balance family responsibilities and the demands of work (Andrews, 1993; Tanaka, 1995). This is captured well in the remarks of Miss Mosoi of Vitabu Primary School in Nairobi, "At this point in my life, the last thing that I can yearn for is to be a headmistress. I am in

a steady relationship and my concern at this time is to get married. The truth is that I imagine losing my boyfriend if I am promoted and then transferred from Nairobi." Similarly, Mrs. Lado of Kiboko Primary School turned down a promotion transfer to a rural school because of family ties.

During in-depth interviews, respondents lobbied for onsite daycare centers, comprehensive policies that enable women to balance work and family responsibilities, modern conveniences to make household work easier, flexible working hours and socialization of men to help with domestic responsibilities as a way of achieving balance.

Mrs. Sinda: We need affordable quality day care centers where we can drop kids in the morning and get them in the evening instead of depending on these unreliable country/village (maids) side girls (Teacher, Ngazi Primary School, Nairobi).

Mrs. Lado: The answer is provision of childcare facilities to those of us with infants (Teacher, Kiboko Primary, and Thika).

Mrs. Kaburi: Our burdens will become somehow lighter if we were to afford washing machines, vacuum cleaners, automatic food cookers and other modern conveniences that make housework easy (Teacher, Mugo Primary School, Thika).

Mr. Zeda: Women's ability to balance work and family will depend heavily on employer attitudes, the presence of flexible workplace policies; child cares cost and availability, and access to time off for family emergencies (Deputy Head Teacher, Baraka Primary School, and Thika)

Mr. Owino: Establishing of comprehensive policies that enables women to balance work and family responsibilities (Headmaster, Mailaika Primary School, and Nairobi).

Miss Rutto: Encouraging sharing family responsibilities and avoid observing the strict traditional gender division of labor if they are to live up to modern challenges (Deputy Headmistress, Nyota Primary School, and Nairobi).

In Ireland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, the provision of day care centers, adoption of comprehensive policies and availability of modern conveniences and support from men have enabled women to balance work and family responsibilities more easily (Wilson, 1997). This is worth trying in Kenya if women are to participate equally in employment.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study establishes that women are majority teachers in Kenya municipal primary schools but hold fewer positions in school administration. Findings reveal that gender-related factors often deter women from entering school administrative roles and impede their career advancement. These factors include lack of role models and mentors, male-centric attitudes about what constitutes leadership and family responsibilities tend to fall mostly on women. Other explanations include societal beliefs surrounding gender socialization; patriarchy, meritocracy, and lack of a pipeline between teaching and administration positions. It is argued that equal participation of men and women in school administration will make schools more representative of the composition of society; it will also make schools more accountable and transparent, and ensures that the interests of women are taken into account in policy-making. From an equity perspective, this situation requires strategies, policies and regulations, research, training, networking and advocacy to promote the status of women in education and leadership positions.

Conflict of Interests

The author have not declared any conflict of interests.

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