

ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING: A CASE OF MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, MACHAKOS COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to establish the role of leadership in gender mainstreaming. A descriptive research design was used in the study. The target population consisted of the county and sub county gender coordinators and the heads of public secondary schools in Machakos County. A total of 64 respondents were sampled through purposive and random sampling techniques. A questionnaire and an interview schedule were used to collect primary data. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the properties of the mass data that were collected from the respondents. From the findings, it is evident that there is inadequate commitment from top-down to the institution, lack of understanding of the gender concept, inadequate training and awareness for teachers, gender imbalance and inadequate training for Board of Governors and Parents Teachers Association and inadequate resources. The study concluded that the government should strengthen commitment and continuous support to gender mainstreaming in the education sector. In addition, all members of the schools management (BOG, PTA) should receive training in gender equality. The commitment to gender mainstreaming in schools must come from the top down to the schools. School management must understand the concept, how to implement it and how to monitor outcomes; MoE should carry sensitization and awareness forums to parents and communities on gender education policy.

JEL Classification:

Key Words: Equal opportunity, Gender, Gender equality, Gender equity, Gender mainstreaming

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Gender mainstreaming was adopted as a major strategy for promoting gender equality at the Fourth World Conference of Women in 1995. It called for mainstreaming in all critical areas of concern which included poverty, human rights, economy, violence against women and armed conflict. In addition, the Beijing Platform of Action established that gender analysis should be undertaken on the respective situation and contributions of both women and men undertaking before development policies and programs (Rai, 2000). Gender mainstreaming is the reorganization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes,

so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policymaking (United Nations, 1997). It is a systematic integration of gender equality into all systems and structures, policies, programs, processes and projects into ways of seeing and doing, into cultures and their organizations (Rees, 2002).

Gender mainstreaming, therefore, is defined as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (United Nations, 1997). It is a principle that means bringing gender into the main stream and into all decision making and organisational work.

2.2 Gender mainstreaming policy framework

The mandate to governments to incorporate a gender perspective into the design, implementation and monitoring of all policies and programmes was emphasized in the platform for action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Governments and the United Nations made commitments to consider the realities of women and men and the potential impact of planned activities on women respective men, before any decisions on goals, strategies, actions and resource allocations are made (United Nations, 1997).

The Beijing Platform for Action recognised that the primary institutional response for the promotion of the advancement of women had been the establishment of national machineries for women which by and large were hampered by unclear mandates, lack of adequate staff, training, data and inadequate support from the national political leadership. The Platform specifies the actions necessary to integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes, projects and the responsibilities of the national machineries (United Nations, 1997). These include the facilitation and implementation of government policies on equality; the development of appropriate strategies and methodologies, the coordination and cooperation within the central government in order to ensure mainstreaming of agender perspective in all policy-making processes (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999; Mitchell, 2004). Without formal policies in place at all levels such as the National strategy, the National Plan of Action for the advancement of women, Sectoral and local plans of action success will often be random or non-existent. There should be a policy on gender equality at all levels, mechanisms to achieve gender equality, specific resources allocated to efforts, and effective accountability, monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Gender advocates should make use of the international conventions and commitments as the basis of their efforts (United Nations, 1997).

2.0 Theoretical Framework on the role of leadership in Gender mainstreaming

Verloo (2001), Hannan (2001) and Woodward (2003), noted that effective implementation begins with the adoption of a gender policy. The value lay in spelling out the country's and organisational commitment and as a reference point for action. The policy mandate must be accompanied with leadership, financial support and technical expertise. They too added that leadership or political will is critical for success. Political will and organisational level leadership from the top is necessary to get the ball rolling. Gender mainstreaming is dependent upon consistence and high profile political commitment. There is a consensus that high profile and

sustained political support is perhaps, the single most important variable in the success and failure of mainstreaming. Mickey and Bilton (2000) further said that formal acknowledgement from political leaders and senior management that gender equality was an essential component of sustainable development was a starting point. Political dialogue is a vital opportunity for promoting and implementing gender equality commitment given that it forms the basis for cooperation, agreement and programmes. Only political leaders and senior managers can properly oversee cross-cutting item which overlaps the various management structures and areas of an organisation.

More so, political commitment has to exist both within political directorate as well as with national machineries. The manifestations of political commitment would include the formulation of policy statements with respect to gender sensitivity, social and economic justice, clear institutional directives rather than discretionary guidelines for gender mainstreaming. The task for governments firstly is to articulate a philosophy of social equity in which gender equality is a necessary and integral component and secondly to ensure system wide responsibility for the attainment of clearly defined targets.

The principle is that redressing inequality is a shared responsibility by all government stakeholders and is not just the job of the Women's union or the National machinery for the advancement of women. High-level leaders must be committed to and support the process of gender mainstreaming. Senior managers must provide clear messages about the priority assigned to gender equality and gender mainstreaming and make demands on the staff for information, analysis and update in progress when such demands are not made and when staff are not held accountable for action on issues of equality, there is little incentive for action.

All staff must take responsibility for understanding the different roles, responsibilities, experiences and inequalities between women and men in relation to the issue being addressed, identify opportunities to actively involve women as well as men in the consultation process, act on women's as well as men's priority concerns, identify ways to promote benefits for women as well as men and identify strategies to reduce gender disparities and promote gender equality (United Nations, 1999).

3.0 Methodology

Descriptive research design was employed in this study. It was found suitable because it enables a researcher to provide a systematic description of current phenomena that is factual and as accurate as possible. Data collected using this design can be used to suggest possible reasons for particular relationship between variables (Gay, 1981).

3.2 Sample and data collection procedures

The target population comprised the ministry of education officials in the county and sub county gender unit coordinators and heads of public secondary schools in Machakos. This gave a target population of two hundred and twelve (212).

Machakos County had eleven (11) sub-counties and three (3) sub-counties were used in the study which was thirty per cent (30%) of the total sub-counties. There were two hundred and twelve (212) public schools in Machakos county and sixty four (64) public secondary schools were used in the study.

3.3 Data collection tools and procedure

Data collection tools used in this study was a questionnaire and an interview guide. The questionnaire was the main data collection tool and it was used to obtain data from the public secondary school heads who are responsible and accountable for the implementation of the Gender policy in education and interview schedule was used for the county and sub-county gender coordinators.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Ministry of education efforts and achievements

The respondents were asked to rate the ministry of education efforts and achievements ,69% of the respondents opted to remain neutral, 22% rated the ministry as good, 7% rated the ministry is poor while 1% either rated the ministry as very poor or excellent. The finding shows that the ministry of education's efforts and achievements in gender mainstreaming in schools require improvement since the respondents were heads of public secondary schools and the majority were not sure of the efforts and achievements.

4.2 Adequacy of resources

On whether the resources (financial, human and material) were adequate,49.5% said that the resources were inadequate, 28.2% said very inadequate, 11.7% remained neutral, and 8.5% said that the resources were adequate while 2.1% said very adequate. This finding shows that resources such as finances, trained personnel and gender materials for enhancing implementation were inadequate. This finding agrees with that of Mackey and Bilton (2003) and Commonwealth Secretariat (1999), Witts and Associates (2007) that allocation of resources is an essential element to support the structure and practices required for mainstreaming activities and enhances official commitment. The ministry of education should have the resources to implement the recommendations and polices. The resources need to be available to carry out and integrate gender in learning. Gender in education policy and planning should be made a priority where resources are limited.

4.3 Government success in its Commitment.

The respondents were asked whether the government will succeed in its commitment to enhance gender equity and equality in education.74.4% of the respondents remained neutral, 9.8% said little, 9.3% said much, and 3.8% said very much while 2.7% said very little. This finding supports the finding of Verloo (2001) and Woodward (2003) that government's commitment begins with the adoption of a gender policy and then clearly spelling out the country's commitment as a reference point for action. The policy mandate should be accompanied with leadership, financial support and technical Mackey and Bilton (2003) that acknowledgement from political leaders and senior management that gender equality is an essential component of sustainable development is a starting point.

4.4 Teachers, students and stakeholders understanding

On whether teachers and the stakeholders who are supposed to participate in the Gender policy in education understood the policy, 58% of the respondents said very little, 28% said little, and 11% remained neutral, 2% said very little and 1% said very much. This finding shows that teachers and stakeholders understood very little about the policy due to inadequate of awareness and training. This is in agreement with the findings of the Council of Europe (2004) that success of mainstreaming necessitates a solid commitment from the

administration, teachers, students, apprentices and from parents and guardians and support by all the participants. This helps them to participate in the implementation.

4.5 Ministry of education sensitization to parents and communities

The respondents were asked whether the ministry of education was sensitizing the parents and the communities on gender equality in schools, 46.2% of the respondents said very little, 36.0% said little, 12.9% remained neutral, 3.8% said much while 1.1% said very much. It confirms the findings of Council of Europe (2004) and Eurydice (2009) and that schools exist within communities and are responsible for the education of children. Through that role they can influence those communities. To influence the broader aspirations of the whole community, schools then must ensure that their mission, aims, objectives and policies are known and that the active participation of the members of the community is sought in assisting in the implementation of those policies. Support of the parents is vital in the promotion of gender equality but despite their important role, government's projects and initiatives that aim to inform and educate them about gender issues are rare and attempts to involve parents more closely in promoting gender equality initiatives in schools are even more limited.

4.6 Heads of schools support by the ministry of education

The respondents were asked whether the ministry of education gave heads of schools support (financial, materials, human, training) in gender equality implementation. 41.2% respondents said that there is little support, 26.4% remained neutral, 22.0% said very little, 7.1% said much and 3.3% said very much. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Squires (2003) that successful mainstreaming must involve top management support and commitment. The commitment forms the basis for cooperation, agreement and programmes. It also supports the findings of the Council of Europe (2004) that the authorities are responsible for the education policy. The ministry should support the authorities involved in education system in order to ensure that gender equality is taken into account at all levels.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on this study several conclusions were made. To begin with, gender mainstreaming in secondary schools has not received adequate support of resources (financial, human and material) from the ministry of education. The government should strengthen commitment and continuous support to gender mainstreaming in the education sector. In addition, all members of the schools management (BOG, PTA) should receive training in gender equality. The commitment to gender mainstreaming in schools must come from the top down to the schools. School management must understand the concept, how to implement it and how to monitor outcomes; MoE should carry sensitization and awareness forums to parents and communities on gender education policy.

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Appendices

Figure 1: Ministry of education efforts and achievements

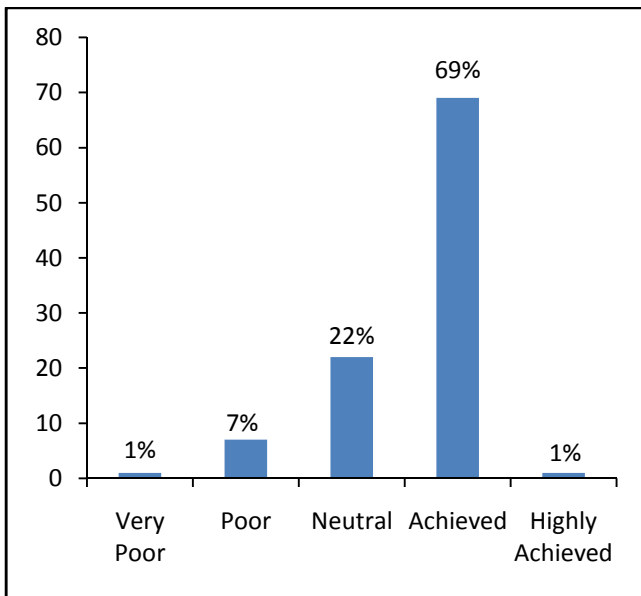


Figure 2: Adequate resources

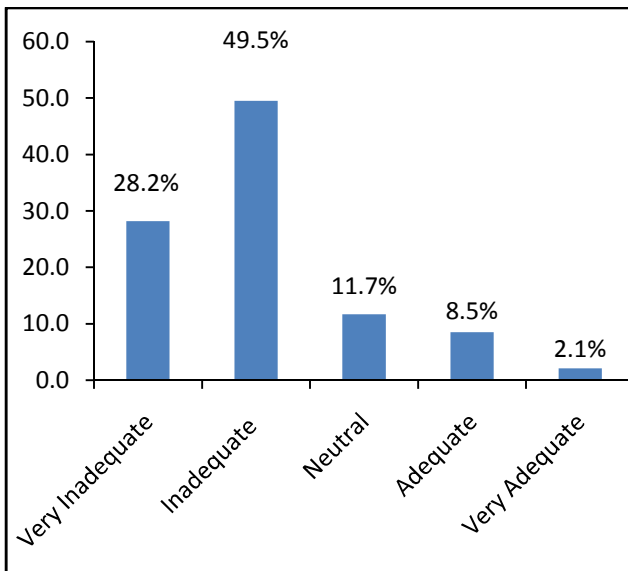


Figure 3: Government success in its commitment

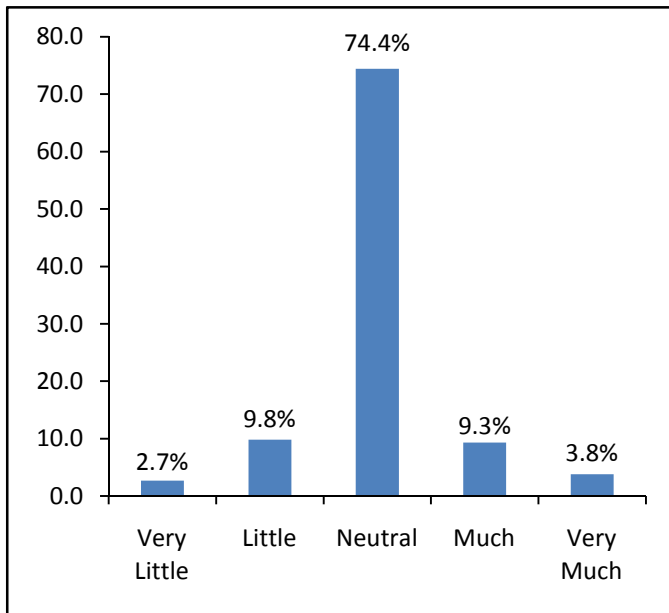


Figure 4: Teachers, students and stakeholders understanding

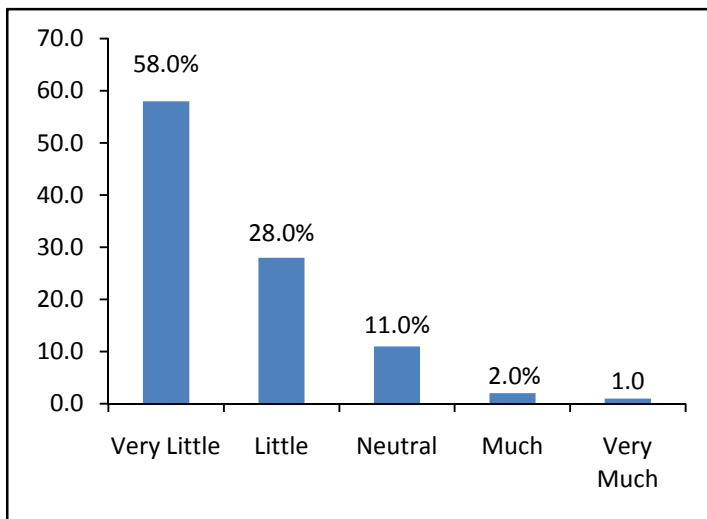


Figure 5: Head support in gender equality implementation

