

PREFACE TO THE CURRENT SITUATION OF WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN UGANDA

INTRODUCTION

At the time of writing this research report about 25 years ago, the situation of women in educational leadership in Uganda in general and in Central Uganda in particular was dire. Women were underrepresented, underutilized and were underperforming in educational administration. Secondary Schools and colleges were fewer and there was only one public University in the country, Makerere University. Private and public Schools, colleges and Universities have now mushroomed in the country. According to Tiberandana (2015), there are now over 17 universities both public and private in Uganda. The number of public or government grant aided secondary schools, have more than doubled from 529 at the time of my earlier research, to over 1000. The number of women in educational leadership has also exponentially increased although the percentage of women in such posts has not kept pace with this increase. The increase in percentage of women in educational leadership has remained relatively slow. According to Ministry of Education and Sports Unwritten Interview (2006), the percentages of women were 20% in public schools and 10% in private schools. According to Sperandio and Kagoda (2010), Uganda is still struggling to meet the goal of 30% representation in leadership roles in education as per the Beijing Platform recommendations.

There has been no specific research which tries to link female educational administrators' performance with their gender sensitivity (how sensitive a female is to the role she has been assigned to and socialized to, from birth) as in Chapter one of this book. However, a number of researchers have

been done on factors and barriers to women managers' advancement to education in Uganda. Many of these factors are still gender nuanced; or coloured by gender outlook. The researcher has therefore decided to refresh her earlier introduction by mentioning some of those factors as below. The researcher has however avoided touching the discussions and conclusions as they reflect the situation as at the time of the research. According to Brown and Raiph (1996:18), the advancement of women educational managers in Uganda is impeded by the cultural imperatives of male dominance and suppression.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

We still live in a gendered world¹, where roles, attitudes, traits, beliefs and even personality of an individual are effected from birth by his or her sex due to the influence of cultural norms and traditions. Men and women are still viewed differently in many aspects of their lives throughout the world. Men still rule the world (Sandberg 2013) and many other scholars such as Kwesiga (2002:15), Jalalzai (2013:1) and global UN reports agree to this statement (United Nations 2015).

Historically most societies considered the biological role of women of procreation and nurturing as the main function of women. With the advent of settled cultivation and capitalism, women continued to be valued as the reproductive individual producing offspring which provided cheap labor. Institutionalization of marriage and privatization of property relegated the woman to the position of private property by man. In all societies female behavior, mode of dressing, freedom of movements, role and participation in public life has been controlled by man who wields power according to

¹ Cellis et al (2013), Aulette Root et al. (2009) and Achebe (2013).

(International Council of Adult Education 1990). Though this mentality is changing slowly (UNDP 2016:128) with advent of globalization, the Beijing Platform for Action 1995, UN Conventions, such as Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and national laws on protection of women's rights legislated by many individual countries which have ratified and domesticated these conventions, women are still generally regarded as physically weak and socially inferior.

In Africa and some areas of the Middle East, there is still a fear in giving higher education to girls, as there was in Europe. The fear is that they may not marry. Cortina (1989) quoted the Mexicans as saying, "An educated woman will neither marry nor come to any good end" (p. 359). The research still supported this and found that the highly educated women are believed to become more argumentative and are conceited. They ignore culture and may be too old for marriage, which makes them poor housewives (Kwesiga 2002: 68-169).

In Africa, the predominantly patriarchal societies limited the women to productive and reproductive roles. The women were supposed to be docile, obedient and simple. They had to work on the land and transmit cultural values, beliefs and practices to their children.

In modern times, certain traits are still gender stereotyped. Broverman et al. (1972) and subsequent empirical evidence (UNDP 2016:101) confirm that the traits such as aggression, forcefulness confidence, ambition, logical thinking, decisiveness, competitiveness, and dominance are believed to be male traits, whereas the female ones are portrayed as submissive, dependent, anxious, unambitious, not competitive and having difficulties in making decisions. D'Amico and Beckman (1995) support this theory.

The so-called female traits are usually undesirable, and less valued than those ascribed to men. This has tended to put women in a disadvantaged position in all aspects of lives vis-a-vis men. Women are viewed as subordinate, dependent and property of their male folk, such as fathers when young, and husbands even when married. This belief still holds true in African and Middle Eastern cultures.

Through the process of socialization, beliefs and norms about gender get ingrained into an individual, from homes, in schools, and through religious practices, folklores, myths, media and the actual upbringing differential by the sex (Megary 1984; UNDP 2016:99). In the homes girls and boys learn that caring for children and domestic chores is the work of girls and women, while earning a living for the family is the role of men. While achievement is stressed for boys, it is rarely stressed for girls. In schools in Uganda to date, girls are still encouraged to take conventional subjects such as home management, needle work and cookery and the arts which prepare the girls for more conventional female roles in life. The curriculum in Uganda still manages to channel boys and girls towards gender-specific employments.

The media continues to portray women negatively. Several reports support this for example, Jalalzai (2013). Women are still seen as inferior and the weaker sex whose main role remains in the home. Many have argued not only in the press but in many fora that women cannot manage both domestic work and employment and do justice to both. Even the women themselves acknowledge this as a critical challenge for which a solution has to be found if they are to participate effectively in public life.

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO FORMAL EMPLOYMENT

“In Uganda, just as in many parts of the world, women have traditionally been employed in the non-formal sector of the economy. In the formal employment, they have been concentrated in jobs that require low levels of skills and technology, responsibilities and pay. Women experience overt discrimination in recruitment and promotion in male dominated jobs based on negative gender role stereotyping. Baron and Bryine (1984) and recent research (United Nations 2015, UN Women 2016) indicate that there is now a slow shift to more egalitarian roles for both men and women worldwide². The world has significantly achieved progress towards gender equality and women empowerment³. Women can now be found in professional and managerial jobs, although still in lower percentages than men. According to UNDP (2016), “In terms of occupation type, women are heavily clustered in low paid occupations such as clerical work or manual labour”. The Uganda Man Power Survey 1989 (Uganda Government 1989) shows that 20% of employees in the formal sector were women compared to 4% in the 1975 ILO report. The number of women in public sector leadership in Uganda currently stands at 33% according to UNDP (2016).

However, it is found that in Europe and the USA women are still discriminated in terms of remunerations. Women who have the same qualifications as men are paid less than men. (Flexer 1971; Morrison and Glinow 1990; Sandberg 2013; UN Women 2016; United Nations 2015). Currently women earn 24% less than men globally. In Uganda this disparity in pay is not obviously experienced initially. Men and women who have the same qualifications and are employed in the same job type earn the same

² “Some progress has been made since 1995 in women’s position in the Labour Market as well as in the equal sharing of family responsibilities” (United Nations 2015: p. 114).

³ There have been significant achievements since Beijing; more girls are enrolling in schools and more women are working, getting elected and assuming leadership roles (UN Women 2016: 12).

pay. Pay differentials may come much later as men may progress up the ladder more quickly than women for a variety of reasons, including lack of promotions for women, as a result of work life imbalance.

Leadership is still considered a predominantly male domain. Chiplin and Sloane (1982) reported that employers are reluctant to employ women in jobs that involve supervision of men. It argues that young men resent being supervised by women, and women fear supervising men. Men are reported to be more suited to supervising women. According to Kirya (1991) in *New Vision Uganda*⁴, John Knox in his book, “The First Blast of Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of Women” in 1558, wrote, “To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city is repugnant to nature...”

Women aspiring for leadership in public life may not persevere for those positions in the face of such strong and lingering oppositions. They may lose confidence in their abilities to lead.

Current global literature find a number of obstacles still prevent women from accessing senior positions in the public sector including the field of educational management despite efforts to increase women’s participation in decision making in all sectors. The Policy Forum on Educationality in Education held in Paris, France on 3 and 4 October in 2011, identified the factors preventing women from accessing senior positions in education as including, tensions between women’s private and domestic lives, the needs to manage domestic responsibilities including childcare, organizational structures and policies that do not meet the needs of female employees, male dominated organizational

⁴ It is one of the major newspapers which are issued in Uganda. This sentence was quoted on 25 Jan, 1991.

cultures which are unfriendly to women's own needs to be mothers as well as good workers, their reluctance to work in male environment, and lack of confidence which is needed when applying for senior management jobs. Women also undervalue their own leadership skills and competence. These are all rooted in the socialization process that has molded men and women differently.

POLICY ISSUES

The colonial government instituted colonial education policies which favoured the education of a few Africans to help administer their colonies. In Uganda, boys, majorly the sons of chiefs were given education from this policy, while some few girls were given education to prepare them to become good wives of these young men. It had an effect on the type and quality of women's education of women in Uganda.

However, the government of Uganda has now put in place Universal Primary Education (UPE) since 1997 and Universal Secondary Education (USE) 2007 policies to provide access to education to children particularly the vulnerable and the marginalized ones, such as girls. The policy of Affirmative Action designed to redress imbalance against women, created by history, traditions and practices in Uganda, was instituted by the government and has become an unwritten law in public schools. This derives from Article 32 (1) of 1995 Constitution like the following.

Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the state shall take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition and customs, for the purposes of addressing imbalances which exists against them.

In education in Uganda, it allows for 30% of heads hired to head public schools to be women. Yet implementation is still impeded by cultural norms which tend to promote male dominance and female suppression.

CULTURE AND RELIGION

Promotion to management positions in education in Uganda is based on a direct selection process, whose nature is highly competitive (MOES 2014: 100). Yet male dominance and suppression are still strong factors in promotion and posting of headship to schools particularly for women in Uganda. Gender roles are still clearly defined, identified, expressed, maintained and in Ugandan schools by the communities. Appropriate roles, behavior and responsibilities are still assigned to head teachers based on their prescribed gender roles.

Although the Uganda Government policy requires that each co-educational school should have either a male or female head and a female deputy or male deputy respectively, women cannot still head purely boys' schools. Despite the needs for changes in cultural and religious practices in the world, where women should now take part in some form of leadership in the church, Gibbs (2005) still stresses that a leader of the church according to Apostle Paul must be "the husband of but one wife" (p. 114). Equally, the Holy Bible in 1 Tim 2:11- 12 states, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over man."(The Holy Bible 2011: p. 1192). This quote still also seems to be at play in Ugandan Christian boys' schools. The women can only deputize in some very rare cases in such schools. However, there is still a preference for women to head girls' schools, particularly those founded by religious organizations such as Protestant, Catholic and Islamic bodies, even public schools. This is because the women are expected to be role models for

the girls, to offer them the culturally and religiously accepted moral, physical and emotional guidance and to mold them for roles they will play in later life (Perlman 1968; Ruddock 1969; Eagley 1989; Kwesiga 2002:240).

The female heads in such schools therefore have to be married women, or if single, then should not be known to have children out of wedlock. Kwesiga (2002) states;

Even today, single mothers are not encouraged to remain on the school staff, especially in Christian founded schools. There are undocumented cases where capable single mothers have been denied influential positions in schools because they are considered to be bad example. (p. 240)

In Missionary schools, teachers must profess and practice the dictates of the faith and should not show what is generally considered immoral behavior before the girl students. Although things are slowly changing, as the researcher had mentioned in her earlier research, such girls are still expected to come out of schools and be able to marry and combine the work of being good mothers and housewives with their professional jobs. The majority of the girls still tend to be employed in typically female jobs such as nursing, doctoring, teaching secretaries etc.

The men in Uganda may still head girls' schools but are always deputized by female teachers. Parents do not trust male head teachers in girls' schools for fear that they may not seriously enforce regulations to prevent sexual harassment of their daughters in the schools, nor to be able to enforce good moral behavior of the young women. In fact, some parents believe that male teachers may even end up defiling or preying on the girls. Recent empirical evidence in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa, such as

those by Kwesiga (2002:76-77) Sperandio and Kagoda (2010), have supported the popular belief that girls achieve better academic results in single sex schools where they are not in direct competition with boys. Such schools are normally headed by qualified and capable women administrators.

Gender and religion therefore remain strong factors in the appointment of male or female teachers to head schools in Uganda and they do affect the performance of all the head teachers substantially.

Other factors that affect the appointment, for example posting and possibly performance of female headship in Ugandan schools, are related to ethnicity or tribes, and regions or geographical locations. Ezenne (2013) finds that head teachers are often rejected by the schools and the communities on account that they are not sons or daughters of the region. This may have a negative effect on female teachers' performance, since the resistance may be so strong that it makes it virtually impossible for the head teacher to effectively perform. Some head teachers have to be transferred as a result of such strong objections. Women who are married across cultures or tribes and have to follow their husbands who may be working in a different region from his birthplace, suffer this kind of rejection most. The researcher herself had been rejected when she had been posted to administer a school in another district which was not her birth place. The rejection had been very strong as the administrative office of school had been locked, so she and the officials of the Ministry of Education and Sports who had come for the handover ceremony with her, could not get access to the office. The school's Board of Governors without even seeing or meeting her, told the officials that they also had qualified daughters of the region who could administer the school and they did not need a woman from another part of the country to help them do so. Any insistence by the researcher to continue and struggle to head the school, would have

resulted in her absolute isolation and failure to manage it. It was this rejection that had catapulted or motivated the researcher into politics.

The issues of education, training and experience are very important factors as well. Due to the difficulty in accessing education and training of the girls from poor families at the higher level, female educational leaders with qualified potentials are few. According to Sperandio and Kagoda (2010), the percentage of women is extremely low in educational leadership. Although these women aspire to educational leadership in secondary schools, some of them do not have the requisite training and experience and are not adequately prepared to undergo the rigorous competitive process of application and selection to school headship, and others even believe that the process is corrupt and then do not apply (Sperandio and Kagoda 2008). Mulyampiti (2015) reports that career paths for women in higher education in Uganda are traditional, but women encounter discrimination often subtle but not always, as well as the requirement for higher energy inputs than their male counterparts to achieve the same goals. The issue of lack of confidence in women educational leaders is a major factor and needs to be investigated adequately addressed. Ezenne (2013:52) in his numerous case studies on educational management in Uganda, reported some female head teacher as having no confidence in herself therefore failing to delegate work, for of fear of loss of power and control. In the end she exhibited poor performance and almost collapsed from overwork. Another female head teacher handled students with kid gloves and abused and ignored teachers and so ended up with serious cases of student indiscipline,(Ezenne 2013 p 71-72). Sperandio and Kagoda, recommend gender specific training programmes that build confidence in women teachers in practical school management skills as well as personal leadership skills.