

## ENGENDERING CHANGE MANAGEMENT ROLES: A CASE OF TOP EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

*Despite efforts by international protocols and conventions, Millennium Development Goal three, Kenya Vision 2030, Ministry of Education gender policy and lately, Kenya's 2010 Constitution to address gender imbalance, there appears to be no difference in the levels of gender inequality in educational management and other senior positions. However, in education, limited participation of one gender group in educational planning and management may lead to decisions that fail to promote participation, retention and learning acquisition of female and male students. This study therefore sought to establish the role of male and female top educational leaders during gender balancing, and to use this as a lens to consider the gendered nature of the change process. Descriptive survey was used. The study was carried out at the Ministry of Education headquarters. Data were collected from top educational leaders using questionnaire and interview schedule. The study established that while no gender should be a change recipient during gender balancing, both gender should play active roles, in equal measures, as change enablers. In addition, female gender should be more active as change drivers while male gender should be more active as change implementers in the process of gender balancing. The study concluded that male and female opinions, concerning change management roles during gender balancing are in the intensity, rather than in the kind. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education should aim at achieving gender parity and that in the process of gender balancing, tailor made capacity building trainings should be provided for both male and female educational leaders. In addition, female educational leaders, as change drivers should form informal and formal groups to create momentum for this change initiative and act as role models of the new reality.*

**Keywords:** Change management, top educational leadership, gender balancing

### INTRODUCTION

The term gender refers to the socially determined power relations, roles, responsibilities and entitlements for men and women as well as boys and girls (Republic of Kenya, 2007a). Chege and Sifuna (2006) add that while we are born male or female, the society teaches us to be men or women. Key points to note concerning gender is that it differs both within and between cultures and defines identities, status, roles, responsibilities and power relations among members of any culture or society. Secondly, it is learned through socialization. Lastly, it is not static, but evolves to respond to changes in the economic, social, technological, political and cultural environments (Kavisi, 2008).

In management, female gender has lagged behind male by far in numbers, especially at decision making positions. This is despite numerous international protocols and conventions that have called for gender parity. For instance globally, just 16 per cent of national political representation is female and only 15 out of 193 countries worldwide have achieved 30 percent women representation in national governments (Sweetman, 2008). According to

Obura (2011), this scenario undermines the principle of human rights, the principle of diversity and the principle of management efficiency. East African Community Secretariat (2009) opines there is no one best way to improve gender balance in a society as a good example from one place might be a disaster in another. However, in order to address gender balancing effectively, as a change initiative, with reasonable results, women's concerns and their roles need to be located in relation to those of men (Chege & Sifuna, 2006).

Effective change management requires a system of actors, all moving in unison and fulfilling their particular roles based on their unique relationship to the change at hand (Vinci, 2009). These change management roles could be change drivers, change implementers, change enablers and change recipients (Business Performance Pty Ltd, 2008). Change driver is the change leader and the principal trouble shooter of the change programme, meaning that he/she is the principal cause and motivator of the change. He/she must ensure that the appropriate resources are committed, problems are solved and that the change succeeds. Change implementer is the change manager, with responsibility for detailed planning and implementation of the change. He/she performs tasks to bring about change. Change enabler set out the environment so that change can happen. He/she is responsible for supporting and communicating change initiatives and allocating the resources required within their area of control by supporting, consoling and coaching employees throughout the change process. Lastly, a change recipient is expected to behave differently in the changed organization (Business Performance Pty Ltd, 2008).

The Government of Kenya is promoting the participation of both genders in decision making, through constitutional, legislative and electoral reforms. Article 27 (4-8) of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya states that the State shall take legislative and other measures, including affirmative action programmes and policies to redress any disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups because of past discrimination and implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender. The Kenya Vision 2030, a blue print for economic, social and political development, proposed to address gender equity in power and resource distribution by 2012 (Republic of Kenya, 2007b). This concern of gender equity should also be applicable in education. From a national perspective, educational management hierarchy in Kenya is composed of top, middle and supervisory levels. The Ministry of Education headquarters is the top level management, while field personnel constitute the middle level management. The supervisory level of management is based in the educational institutions and is composed of the head teachers, the teachers, school committees, and school management boards (Kimemia, 1992). The study focused on top educational management where policies governing management of education are formulated and approved. The implication is that what happens at the top in terms of gender balance is likely to be cascaded to educational institutions. Studies by Wanjama (2002), Republic of Kenya (2007a) and Obura (2011) show that women are under-represented in top educational management positions. Not only is gender disparity at decision making positions a violation of social justice, human rights and democracy (Obura 2011), but in education, limited participation of one gender group in educational planning and management may lead to decisions that fail to promote the participation, retention and learning acquisition of female and male students (UNESCO, 2011). In addition, the Ministry of Education, as a leading educating agency of government has critical role in addressing gender balance in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2007a), not only by leading in educating, but in practise as well (Obura, 2011).

While a considerable body of research such as Wanjama (2002) and Obura (2011) have addressed the causes of this gender disparity, there is little research on how a 50-50 gender

balance should be achieved. Secondly, while issues concerning management of change as well as issues of gender in work places have come under a great deal of scrutiny, there is little research linking gender and change management (Paton & Dempster, 2002). It is within this context that this study sought to establish the action roles of existing top educational leadership during gender balancing and to use this as a lens to consider the gendered nature of the change process itself.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was used in this study. Survey design was found to be most appropriate because it enabled the researchers to get information from a sample of educational managers and to use the information to describe and explain the roles of male and female educational managers during gender balancing process. The study was conducted at the professional wing of the Ministry of Education headquarters in Nairobi. The Ministry of Education as constituted at the time of the study was mandated to manage basic education which included early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, teacher education and adult education. The Ministry headquarters was purposively sampled in the education sector because it is where top management in education, responsible for policy formulation in the country, is located. The implication is that what happens at the top in terms of gender balance is likely to be cascaded to educational institutions. The target population was 183 top educational managers, three gender officers and 15 human resources management officers. Saturated sampling was used to select all the 183 educational managers and all the three gender officers for the study. Three top human resource management officers were purposively sampled. Stratified sampling technique was then employed to categorise the sample of study by gender. Questionnaire, interview schedule and document analysis guide were used as instruments of data collection. The instruments were validated by experts in the School of Education at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology and educational managers from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. A pre-test of refined questionnaires was done at the headquarters of Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology for the purpose of testing reliability. Data were analysed by calculating percentages and mean scores

## RESULTS

The main objective of this study was to establish the roles of the existing top educational leadership during gender balancing. Respondents were asked to indicate which gender should be change drivers, change implementers, change enablers and change recipients during gender balancing using a five point Likert scale. The results obtained in percentages are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Opinions of male and female respondents on change management roles**

	<i>Respondents</i>			
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
Change Drivers	81.6	92.0	91.3	91.3
Change Implementers	82.8	85.1	91.3	86.9
Change Enablers	97.7	95.4	100.0	100.0
Change Recipients	13.8	13.8	10.8	10.8

It is clear from the table that both male and female respondents felt that male and female gender should be change drivers, change implementers and change enablers during gender balancing process. In addition a higher percentage of male respondents felt that female gender should change drivers and change implementers than those who felt male gender should play the same roles. The percentage of male respondents who felt male gender should be change enablers were higher than that who felt female gender should be change enablers. On the other hand, more female respondents felt that male gender should be change implementers during the gender balancing process. Mean scores were computed to enable comparisons between male and female respondents on the change management roles. The results were as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Comparison of change management roles in male and female gender**

	<i>Driver</i>		<i>Implementer</i>		<i>Enabler</i>		<i>Recipient</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Male	3.74	3.94	3.61	3.79	3.86	3.92	2.01	2.02
Female	3.89	4.00	3.91	3.85	4.13	4.09	1.92	1.93
Average	3.81	3.97	3.74	3.82	3.98	4.00	1.99	1.99

The table shows that on average, female gender had higher mean scores than male as change drivers, change implementers and change enablers. This shows that in as much as both gender should be change drivers, change implementers and change enablers during the gender balancing process, female gender is expected to be more active in these change management roles if gender parity is to be achieved at top educational management positions.

Analysis of the action roles during gender balancing as opined by male respondents show that while both male and female gender should be change drivers, change implementers and change enablers, the female gender should be more active in all these roles. In addition, female gender's most active role should be as change drivers, followed by change enablers and least active role should be as change implementers. According to female respondents, female gender should be more active than male gender as change drivers. On the other hand male gender should be more active than female as change implementers and change enablers. In addition, male gender's most active role should be as change enablers, followed by change implementers and the least should be as change drivers. The female gender's most active role should be as change enabler, followed by change driver and least should be change implementer. Both male and female respondents were of the opinion that if either gender was a change recipient, gender balancing process would be slow.

Through an open ended question, the respondents were asked to give action roles for male and female educational managers that would lead to attainment of gender parity. A lot of the roles listed show that male and female gender could be change driver, implementer, and change enablers in varying degrees. However certain insights coming up included: both gender should loudly say no to the imbalance; male gender should be on the forefront of gender balancing since they have the masses already; male and female gender should view gender balancing not as an issue of superiority or inferiority, but as improvement of quality of work in diversity of management; details of fears and threats to a gender balanced top educational management should be addressed by both gender; female gender should not accept positions on any other basis other than merit and should take up the challenge; the two

gender should not view each other as competitors but as partners; male gender need to concede ground to create room for female gender; and female gender should act as role models of the new reality.

The study agrees with Vinci (2009) that actors in any change initiative should move in unison and fulfil their roles during a change process. In addition as Business Performance Pty Ltd, (2008) suggests, these roles include change driver, change implementer, change enabler and change recipient.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions were reached based on the stated objective:

2. If a state of parity in representation is to be achieved, both male and female must be active change drivers, change implementers and change enablers.
3. The basic difference in action roles of male and female gender during gender balancing was in the intensity of the role rather than in the kind.
4. Male respondents felt that female gender should be more active as change drivers, change implementers and change enablers if gender parity is to be achieved. This seems to point at a lay back attitude on the side of male gender.
5. According to female respondents, female gender should be more active as change drivers, while male gender should be more active as change implementers and change enablers. This seems to point at an attitude of all-inclusiveness in gender balancing.
6. If gender parity is to be achieved, no gender should wait to be a change recipient.

Based on these conclusions the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ministry of Education, as a Ministry with crosscutting and wide-ranging role of educating the nation in all matters of fundamental interest should aim at a state of gender parity at all levels of management.
2. The Ministry of Education should provide tailor made capacity building trainings for both male and female educational leaders during the process of gender balancing.
3. Female educational managers, since both male and female respondents feel they should drive the process of gender balancing, should establish both formal and informal groups inclusive of both male and female gender to network, lobby, to act as information bureau, to support, to encourage and to create momentum for gender balancing until parity is achieved.
4. The female educational managers must act role models for the new state of gender representation.

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