

IMPACT OF GENDER EQUITY CAMPAIGNS ON THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Chikwe Agbakwuru (Ph.D) and Okafor, H. C. (Mrs.)

Abstract

This survey study was conducted in Owerri Educational Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. The population is 4225 public secondary school teachers in the zone while the sample is 606 duly principals and vice principals whose complete data were available at the statistics Department of the Secondary Education Management Board Zonal Office, Owerri. Four research questions were posed and answered with simple percentage test statistic based on data about the sample which were sought and collected from (the Statistics Department of the Secondary Education Management Board Zonal Office, Owerri. The results show that despite intensive gender equity campaigns, women are still marginalised in educational leadership in the zone. In the light of these results, some implications of the study were also highlighted.

Introduction

Since the past two decades, there have been very serious gender sensitizations and equity campaigns in Nigeria. In fact, these sensitizations and campaigns appear to have become topical issues after the Beijing Conference (Okobia and Akpochafo, 1997). These programmes are aimed at achieving equity between male and female in school enrollment rate, school completion rate and equal access to social, economic, political and career opportunities. They are necessitated by the fact that Nigerian women are lagging behind their male counterparts in the attainment of formal education, career and political opportunities open to them, as well as the chances of advancing to management or leadership positions. This condition, which is viewed as unhealthy both to womanhood and to meaningful national development, has made successive governments in Nigeria to continue to evolve various policies and programmes to liberate the female folk from the shackles of ignorance and illiteracy. The belief is that when women are thus liberated, they will be more skillful, more productive and more assertive in demanding their rights as well as in contributing optimally to national development. This view is justified because research (Ukpong, 1999), has shown that high level of education leads to high level of income and brighter career prospect. On the other hand, the reverse is the case for low level of education.

These sensitizations and gender equity campaigns seem to be yielding dividends especially in the enhancement of the school enrolment rate of females as well as in their school completion rate. In fact, in some states of the federation especially Anambra State, statistical data (UNICEF, 2001), show that more females now go to school. Regrettably, this increase in the number of women who now have access to education seems not to be matched by a corresponding increase in career opportunities open to them as well as in the number of those who rise to leadership or management positions in their professions or in political spheres. Carew (1997: 28), has identified a number of factors that are responsible for this sorry state of affairs. In his words, men are in positions of authority and influence and make a greater percentage of decisions on employment and promotions of women. Unfortunately, these are men who have sex - role stereotyped attitudes towards the women. The result of this is that their attitudes besides blocking the entry of women into these careers they perceive as the exclusive reserve of men, also make it difficult for women to rise to leadership or management positions in their chosen careers.

In addition to this external factor, Carew (1997), equally identified other internal factors that reduce female chances of rising to top management or leadership positions and career aspirations. These factors include role conflicts and low self-esteem. These are developed through the socialization process where girls are not only made to perceive some occupations and positions as strictly for men only, but also see themselves as less competent and weaker than men. The combination of these two internal factors creates a situation whereby many women develop fear of

failure in certain occupations and leadership positions.

Sadly, the impact of the intensive women sensitizations and gender equity campaigns in bridging the wide gap between the number of men and women at the top leadership or management positions in career and political sectors of our national life remain largely unknown because of the apparent lack of research reports in this area. It is the desire to fill this gap in knowledge that prompted the researchers to embark on this research. It is expected that the results beside filling this missing link in knowledge bank, will also provide feedback on the current state of affairs regarding the number of men and women who occupy leadership positions especially in public educational institutions in Owerri educational zone of Imo State. The need for this feedback cannot be over-emphasized since it would be the basis of fine-tuning correcting, as well as controlling the women sensitizations and gender equity campaigns.

Statement of the Problem

Research report (Oladunni, 1999), has identified teaching as one of the occupations where occupational segregation has lumped women. In fact, it is speculated that majority of teachers in the nations primary and secondary schools are women. However, there is a popular belief that the dominance of women in this profession is at the lower and middle level manpower rather than at the leadership position. Regrettably, this belief lacks empirical evidence hence, it cannot be relied upon. In a situation like this, the problem of this study is therefore, posed in question form thus: What has been the impact of women sensitizations and gender equity campaigns in bringing about a state of balance between the number of males and females who are at leadership in public secondary schools in Owerri educational zone of Imo State, Nigeria?

Research Questions

The following research questions are posed to guide the study:

1. To what extent has gender equity campaigns enhanced the number of women who are appointed as duty principals of senior secondary schools?
2. To what extent has gender equity campaigns enhanced the number of women who are appointed as duty principals of junior secondary schools?
3. To what extent has gender equity campaigns enhanced the number of women who are appointed as duty vice principals of senior secondary schools?
4. To what extent has gender equity campaigns enhanced the number of women who are appointed as duty vice principals of junior secondary schools?

Research Methodology

This study is a descriptive research. Specifically, it is a survey study. The study was carried out in Owerri educational zone of Imo State, Nigeria. The area of study is located in the eastern part of Imo State and consists often (10) local government areas. Statistical data which was collected from the statistics department of the Secondary Education Management Board Zonal Office, Owerri, was the basis for the study. This data shows that the area of study has one hundred and fifty three (153) public senior secondary schools and one hundred and fifty four (154) public junior secondary schools. The area of study also has a total number of four thousand, two hundred and twenty five (4225) public secondary school teachers. Out of this number, two thousand two hundred and eighteen (2218) are in senior secondary schools while the remaining two thousand and seven (2007) are in the junior secondary schools. Furthermore, male teachers in senior secondary schools are one thousand, one hundred and twenty four (1124) while the remaining one thousand and ninety four (1094) are female teachers. In a related way, there are six hundred (600) male teachers in junior secondary schools while the remaining one thousand four hundred and seven (1407) are female teachers.

Relevant data for answering the four research questions posed for the study were also sought and collected from the statistical department of the Secondary Education Management Board Zonal Office, Owerri. The results of the analysis of the data are presented in the following tables:

Table 1

Number and sex of duty principals Senior Secondary Schools

Number	Male	%	Female	%	Total
148	99	66.89	49	33.11	100

The result on table I shows, that out of 148 duty principals of senior secondary schools whose complete data were available 99 representing 66.89 percent are males while the remaining 49 or 33.11 percent are females. This result shows that despite intensive gender equity campaigns, men still dominate as duty principals in public secondary schools in Owerri Educational zone.

Table 2
Number and sex of duty Principals in Junior Secondary Schools

Number	Male	%	Female	%	Total
149	77	51.68	72	48.32	100

The result on table 2 shows, that out of a total number of 149 duty principals of junior secondary schools whose complete data were available, 77 representing 51.68 percent are males while the remaining 72 or 48.32 percent are females. This result also shows that gender equity in appointment into the post of duty principals in public junior secondary schools is still lacking.

Table 3
Number and sex of duty Vice Principals in Senior Secondary Schools

Number	Male	%	Female	%	Total
156	84	53.85	72	46.15	100

The result on table 3 shows, that out of 156 duty vice principals of senior secondary schools, 84 or 53.85 percent are males while 72 or 46.15 percent are females. This result equally shows that males also dominate in educational leadership even as duty vice principals.

Table 4 Number and sex of duty Vice Principals in Junior Secondary Schools					
Number	Male	%	Female	%	Total
153	72	47.06	81	52.94	100

The result on table 4 shows, that out of 153 duty vice principals in junior secondary schools whose complete data were available, 72 or 47.06 percent are males while 81 or 52.94 percent are females. This result shows that there are more female duty vice principals in junior secondary schools. This result does not however completely rule out male dominance in educational leadership.

Discussion of Findings

The first research question sought to find out how far gender equity campaigns have enhanced the number of women who are appointed duty principals in public senior secondary schools in Owerri educational zone of I mo State, Nigeria. This research question was answered with simple percent test statistic and the result shows that ninety-nine (99) principals representing 66.89 are males while forty-nine (49) or 33.11 are females. The sex of the remaining five (5) principals was not indicated. This result shows that the intensive gender equity campaigns have, not enhanced significantly the number of women who are appointed duty principals of public senior secondary school. This result vindicates the report of Agbakwuru (2003), which showed that women are playing the second fiddle in leadership in Nigeria.

A number of reasons seem to be responsible for the wide margin between the number of male and female duty principals of public senior secondary schools in Owerri educational zone. The first of these reasons is not unconnected with the prevailing practice of yesteryears whereby many parents/guardians did not consider the education of their daughters as important as that of their sons. The result of this presently is that the number of male teachers who have risen to the rank of being appointed as duty principals is more than that of the female teachers. A second reason for this state of affairs has to do with the lack of interest of many female teachers in being appointed as duty principals. The lack of interest has nothing to do with incompetence or intellectual mediocrity rather, it is caused by the

desire of many female teachers to have more time, which they will devote to their families.

Furthermore, the second research question which was also answered with simple percentage test statistic investigated the extent gender equality campaigns have enhanced the number of women who are appointed duty principals of public junior secondary schools in Owerri educational zone. The result of the analysis shows that seventy-seven (77) male teachers representing 51.68 percent are duty principals while seventy-two (72) or 48.32 percent are females. While the number/percentage of female duty principals in the public junior secondary schools is higher than that of the public senior secondary schools, gender equality seems to be seriously lacking judging from the fact that there are as many as one thousand four hundred and seven (1407) female teachers in public junior secondary schools in contrast to only six hundred (600) male teachers. This situation is very worrisome in view of the fact that all the duty principals in public junior secondary schools in the state were appointed in 2006 when public secondary schools in I mo State were split into junior and senior secondary schools. What this result means is that the intensive gender equality campaigns in our society have not done much in enhancing the number of women who are appointed into leadership positions in the teaching profession. This situation exists because research report (Carew, 1997), has shown that men are in positions of authority and so influence and make a greater percentage of decisions on employment and promotions of women. According to the same source, these men have sex-role stereotype attitudes towards the women and these hinder not only women's career aspirations and choices but also, their career advancement.

In a related way, the third research question sought to find out how far gender equity campaigns have enhanced the number of women who are appointed duty vice principals in public senior secondary schools in Owerri educational zone. This research question was equally answered with simple percentage test statistic. The result shows that 84 males representing 53.85 percent are duty vice principals while seventy-two (72) females representing 46.15 percent are duty vice principals. A comparison of this result with the result of the first research question shows that there are a higher percentage of women who are appointed duty vice principals than those who are appointed duty principals. While equity in terms of equality of males and females cannot be said to have been achieved in the number of those who are appointed duty vice principals, the result is however, encouraging based on the fact that when these duty vice principals are promoted, the number of women who will be duty principals will be greater than what it is presently.

Finally, the fourth research question investigated how gender equity campaigns have enhanced the number of women who are appointed duty vice principals in junior secondary schools. Like the previous research question it was also answered with simple percentage test statistic and the result shows that out of the 153 duty vice principals whose data were available, seventy-two (72) representing 47.06 percent are males while the remaining eighty-one (81) or 52.94 percent are females. The males still feel very comfortable when the female are playing the second fiddle. This can be inferred from the results of research questions one and two which show that there are more male duty principals both in the senior secondary as well as in the junior secondary schools. This situation is unfortunate and inimical to national development because as Etuk (2003), has correctly pointed out, in a society where gender roles have shackled women to the floor thereby preventing them from participating optimally at every level of the society's life and leadership, such society can at best, function at half steam rather than at full capacity.

Conclusion

The results of this study have shown that gender equity campaigns have not taken women to the "promised land". In view of this fact, there is need for the intensification of these campaigns and sensitizations. The results of the study also have implications for professional guidance counsellors. In fact, these officials should engage women in assertive training and ego boosting activities. These would help them to overcome their seemingly low self-esteem and thus, demand their rights when necessary. Finally, professional guidance counsellors should help women to develop better attitude towards time management. This will not only help a greater percentage of them to develop interest in accepting leadership responsibilities but also help them to use their time in such a way that neither their official responsibilities nor those of their families suffer.

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