

**GENDER DISPARITY IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THARAKA SOUTH DISTRICT**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Gender disparity in Leadership is not only a hot debate in Kenya but is also a Global concern, Muteshi, (2006). Several factors are cited for this disparity and most of these factors are blamed for male domineering tendencies. However a close study reveals deep rooted factors which do not necessarily touch on male gender. Though the government's effort in addressing gender inequality seems to be evident, the real impact of the initiatives is still not realized. The purpose of this study was to investigate the gender disparity in administrative positions for primary schools in Tharaka South District. The study investigated and analyzed the factors that are considered as barriers to women teachers' advancement to headship positions in Kenyan public primary schools. The study used descriptive survey research design. The targeted population included the Heads of Tharaka South District Schools (120), the zonal education officers (17), and the District Human Resource Officer of Tharaka South District (1). In total 160 officers were interviewed. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample to obtain a sample size of 45 heads of schools. Data was collected through interviews, observations and questionnaires. SPSS version 15.0 was used to analyze the data. Study findings revealed that disparity in administration of primary schools is more of a social cultural problem than a policy issue. Study has shown that the majority of the women teachers in the study were adequately qualified for promotion to school headship positions. In contrast, most of them were not in leadership positions and hence were still classroom teachers. One reason for the persistent under-representation of women in school leadership roles was found to be their continued preference for family responsibilities at the expense of their own career development. The study revealed that there was a serious gender disparity in headship where 94% of heads were males and only 6% were females. Family obligations accounted for 44% of reasons for the disparity, geographical factors 28% and cultural beliefs 26%. The achievement of employment equity in primary school headship will require a variety of strategies targeting gender stereotyping by individuals, institutions and policies. The study recommends more recruitment of women into educational administration positions. Women need equal opportunities, encouragement and support to allow them access to and success in school administration. After all, there is a growing body of literature on women administrators that supports the image of the competent, successful, career-minded female administrators.