

NARRATIVES OF FEMALE LEADERS IN EDUCATION; THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONAL PATRONAGE IN UGANDAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Dr. Tuyizere Alice Peace

1.0 Introduction

- UNESCO (2016) acknowledges that females are usually under-represented on school management committees and where they are on committees, they tend to be assigned to welfare duties but not involving them in finance or decision making positions;
- Religious philosophers say; Women who fail to follow Paul's instruction in Ephesians 3; 1-7 of submissiveness, are much like their mother Eve who led her husband to sin.
- Development Goal No.5 is devoted to gender equality and aims to achieve gender equality and empower all females in all aspects of life, school leadership inclusive (Queisser, 2016).
- Religion has been at the front line in undermining females' rights to participate in school administration because of the assumption that they may not manage menial tasks that go with leadership.

Methodology

- This research focused on the narrations of female leaders in secondary school education in Uganda.
- Participants in the study included 70 female leaders in education, 30 denominational founders of secondary schools and 300 secondary school female students in school leadership positions.
- Instruments for data collection were questionnaires, interviews, documentary analysis and group focused discussions. The research design was quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Results

- A key feature in the findings was that female leaders were appointed by the masculine religious founders, supervised by area priests, had school religious patrons or priests ;
- In this context a female leader narrated her story;
 - I worked for fifteen years in this catholic founded school as a Director of Studies and my performance impressed the founders of the school.
 - I was promoted to a position of deputy headmistress but I was protestant by religion.
 - The priest in charge of staff welfare called me in privacy and asked whether I would convert to Catholic faith in order to be promoted to deputy headmistress.

My Decision with consulting the religious patronage almost cost me my job

- In a low tone, a Catholic headmistress narrated how her decision to build a school hall brought her in conflict with the parish priest;

I had a meeting with the school management to put up an examination hall. We opted for a bungalow hall because the funds were not enough but the parish priest wanted a storied building to save land but I implemented the decision of the school management. It almost cost me my job

.

Religious founders plunder school accounts using female heads

;

- In this context a female headmistress narrated;
- My Anglican Bishop asked me to give him 12 million Uganda Shillings from the school account without signing for it. He wanted money to address personal problems but didn't want to take responsibility for it;
- Refusing to give him the money led to me to be demoted to a unestablished school

Narratives of female leaders' performance in education

- I was excited when I was informed by my parish priest that the church had confidence in me to head a mixed secondary school. I replaced a male, who was transferred because of misappropriating school funds. When I came here in 2014, the student population was 350 but now we are approaching 1000. There were few buildings in place so I embarked on putting up that storied building and an examination hall. Right now I am constructing a computer lab for the school. Academic performance has also greatly improved and I think the church is happy but heading a large school like this one is very challenging, one needs to be resilient, focused and hardworking.

Family responsibilities hinder female performance Leadership in education;

- I have a family to look after, a husband to attend to so that he is not hooked by other women and a farm to supervise.
- When I am pregnant, I attend anti-natal clinics, sometimes I have morning sleep and nausea, I go for maternity leave and I have to make sure that the general environment at home is enabling.
- Sometimes I do not have a housemaid to leave the children with, so I am forced to stay at home.
- This situation affects my performance and at times I feel like resigning but my husband encourages me to cling on to the job.

Narratives depicting the Working Environment

- My husband became a barrier to my leadership aspirations. He suspected me to be having an affair with the bishop who happened to be the overseer of the school.
- He started writing abusive letters to him and finally attacked him in his residence which was quite embarrassing to me, the church and the school I headed.
- His acts were so demeaning that they undermined my work. I got embarrassed, ashamed and broken hearted and my heart sobbed beyond repair.
- My husband actually crushed my profession.

Another female lady narrated; My marriage was gone.

- My husband suffered from stress, got mental illness because he thought that one of the priests was having an affair with me.
- He abandoned his work and used to spend all his time sitting with me in office trying to monitor whether the suspected religious leader comes to my office.
- Every school meeting I organized, he would attend to the end.
- This sounded rather awkward and a challenge to my leadership.

Single female leaders in education narratives;

- I got pregnant before marriage when I was heading a Christian Religious Education Department.
- The headmistress advised me to leave school very fast before the religious founders would know.
- My pregnancy without official marriage in a religious founded school lowered my dignity and traumatized me .
- I was forced to leave religious founded school
- Single female leaders are not respected compared to those who are married

Narratives on Preferred Gender to Head School

I am a male catholic priest and I am not ashamed to say the truth, female gender is the best to run a secondary school of any category. Female head teachers are more committed to their work, transparent, accountable, respectful, duty bound, always available

- Another protestant priest narrated; Whereas I admit that females can be good leaders in education, I prefer male head-teachers in mixed and single males' schools.
- This is because female leaders in education are weak, rigid, rude, hot tempered, unforgiving and mostly to their fellow women.
- They fight their fellow women in various ways which among others include; harassing them when they come late or absent from school, denying them promotion, and training for further studies.
- They are lenient to male teachers compared to female teachers.
- They tend to give more responsibilities to males compared to females.

Female Student Leaders and their Discourses on religious patronage

- . I had captured the majority of the students to vote for me and I seemed to be leading my opponent.
- Realizing that I had more support than the Catholic competitor, the teacher who was organizing elections called me a day before the voting to step down for my colleague due to religious reasons.
- He openly told me that the school and the entire church could not allow me to head a Catholic school when I was a protestant.
- I was advised to campaign for a lower post

Challenges of student female leadership

- I feel discouraged when male students abuse my leadership styles.
- They nickname me and even hide my books to see my reaction or remove my seat in class.
- In some cases, male teachers abuse me before my fellow students for not performing well in class, relating this to my leadership and I feel demoralized.
- When I am alone I ponder about what I am going through and feel like stepping down.

Discussion

- The study found that although many female teachers had joined the teaching profession at secondary level, few occupied top leadership positions.
- Religious patronage and denominational bias in recruitment were found to be among the factors leading to few females in top positions(Kagoda;2011; Shepherd &UN,2018)

Conclusion

- Drawing from the female narratives, it was concluded leadership is a service and it goes with responsibilities and commitment.
- Females must fight low self-esteem, gender stereotypes and bias through hard work during their leadership tenure rather than thinking about the public views towards them.
- Female leadership in education is one of the most critical issues that target retention of female students in secondary schools.

Recommendations

- Stakeholders should dig deeper into the barriers that females leading education face and how these hurdles can be overcome;
- Religious founding bodies of schools are challenged to close the gender gaps in leadership in secondary schools since ;
- Recruitment of female leaders in education should be based on qualifications, competence and experience but not religion

Thank You

For God and My Country