

EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY WOMEN TO ACCEDE TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine the successful strategies adopted by women to accede to leadership in the public sector in Kenya. The sector is the policy making and implementation nucleus of the country. Women in Kenya, though making significant entries into the public service, are still grossly underrepresented in senior management and public decision-making positions (Suda, 2002). It is pertinent that all players who contribute to the wellbeing of society are brought on board through strategies such as education that may be employed to ensure distributive inclusion. Several studies have been carried out on the factors that hinder women from acceding to the leadership and decision making levels. However few studies have investigated strategies that women may employ to accede to the pertinent positions of policy making. This study adopted exploratory research design while the population is the non elected women leaders in the public sector in Kenya. Samples were drawn using stratified random sampling across the public sector. Questionnaires were employed to collect data. The data obtained was analyzed quantitatively. A simple linear regression model was used to model the data and corresponding analysis carried out. The study principally concluded that

Key Words: Successful Strategies, Education, Women, Leadership, Public Sector, Kenya

1.0 Introduction

Occupation of top leadership across the world is still difficult for many to grasp. The women who succeed in attaining those positions need to be both exceptional and exceptionally able to deal with enormous social and psychological pressures (Lewis, 2004). Women however, still have the right and obligation to participate in leadership and management where they bring a different perspective of leadership (Clinton-Rodham, 2003; Neuman, 1998; Maathai, 2006; Thomas & Wilcox, 2005). Researchers have found and argued that having and retaining more women in leadership would help solve problems associated with perpetual poverty, especially as it affects women. Women leadership not only aids in building nations but also balance up decision making processes, but has to be sought strategically (Epstein, Niemi & Powell, 2005).

Leadership has been identified as one of the keys to organizational success and women leadership is an absolute necessity in tackling gender disparities leading to solutions to the many gender issues in time and context (Biseswar, 2008). Nowhere is having adequate leadership more important than in Africa; as many countries grapple with significant economic and social problems, Kenya included. Further, the public service is central to policy making, service delivery and improvement of the socio-economic status of the population (Institutional Framework for implementation of Business Process

Re-engineering in the Public Service, 2011). This means the public service must draw upon all the leadership talent in the country to ensure adequate leadership. However local statistics indicate women in Kenya have less access to senior leadership positions in the public service and yet still face considerable obstacles in ascending to the top (Suda,2002, Kamau,2008). Despite this, some women have been able to break through the glass ceiling to fill top senior leadership positions in the public service. The purpose of this study is to examine what strategies they adopted to break through the glass ceiling.

2.0 Statement of the problem

Kenyan women constitute over 50% of the entire population (UNDP, 2010). This forms a critical portion of the human resource base yet they remain greatly challenged with regard to strategies aimed at ascendancy to leadership positions where pertinent policies affecting them and the entire country are made (Kamau 2001, Gachukia, 2002). Lack of both strategies for and actual ascension to top leadership positions has meant locking out important, measurable, competitive and excellent skills brought in by women leadership. It is having them stay out of policy making involvement which is detrimental because it translates to their persistent poverty, powerlessness and underrepresentation in decision making arenas (Onsongo, 2005). This is despite the fact that studies have found a strong positive correlation between a critical mass of women leaders and outstanding business performance (Nugent, 2002, McKay, 2007).

As Kenyan women continue to struggle for strategies for ascension to leadership and therefore decision making, the aforementioned problems are perpetuated. Women and leadership policy strategies and advocacy interventions are left unattended due to their glaring absence (Onsongo, 2004). This ultimately contributes to overall national underdevelopment. Representation of both men and women in decision making processes is critical for making and implementing policies that affect the general population (Suda, 2002). This includes participation in Government organs, civic and senior Government positions, among others.

Studies have been carried out (Wanjama, 2002, Onsongo, 2006, Maina, 2010, Obura, 2011,) on factors affecting women participation in leadership in various sectors in Kenya. There is general consensus in terms of factors impeding accession of women to leadership (Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009). This is not the case for studies on the strategies adopted by women, as individuals or as groups, to access the slowly realized successes in leadership positions. This study aims at exploring the strategies they have adopted to ascend to top leadership in the public sector in Kenya.

3.0 Objective of the study

To investigate whether education and training is a successful strategy adopted by Women to accede to leadership positions in the public sector in Kenya.

4.0 Literature review

4.1 Education

Education requires instruction of some sort from an individual or composed literature (Berg, 2009). An organizational base for advancement is knowledge and education (human capital). Access to education and training are therefore important in maintaining an organizational competitive edge.

Employees must hence develop and maintain skills and abilities through the right kinds of education and training opportunities, as well as experience (Reimers-Hild et al, 2007).

Women in Kenya are still disadvantaged by limited skills resulting from lower levels of education. Most women work in lower cadre jobs in the public service because according to regulations, positions in the civil service are offered on competitive basis (Limo, 2011). A status report indicates that 84% of senior positions are taken up by men while women take only 16%. This suggests that women should access proper training so as to compete in rising up the ladder. In general, and according to the Ministry of Education's statistics Section (2006), enrolment for female students decreases at the higher levels of education, perhaps due to the social and cultural factors. The fact that transition to university education is still low requires targeted interventions on education retention in order to achieve higher women representation in leadership.

Like in any other part of the world, education in Kenya recognizes the need to address the gender disparity. As a major role, education enhances positive change and influences national development (McMichael, 2004). Leaving women out of the education arena is therefore tantamount to delaying development since they form quite a part of the general population. Analysis in Kenya of the women with education vis-a-vis the uneducated ones reveals that like in the rest of the world, education empowers women. It helps them implement the needed social change such as raising smaller and healthier families, among other matters of national importance (Moraa, 2000).

4.1.1 Historically.....

In Kenya, focus on education has existed since independence as a societal right and responsibility. Various analyses show that educated girls fare better than the uneducated ones in decision making own (Muchungu, 2003). This capability eventually impacts on key public decisions made in the country leading to development. It is instructive that the government makes decisions to positively influence women education leading to participation in decision making (Muthengi, 2003). This will lead not only to positive impacts not only on households but also in population growth campaigns and more education opportunities for women as a result of campaigns by other women (ROK, 2011).

According to Kibaki (2002), education for girls does not only improve the demographics but democracy as well. This is because education allows people to choose from possibilities through discussions. With women education advancing, Kenya will develop more than the neighboring countries. Education comes out as a great importance for societal growth in many areas of humanity, a fact ignored by some societies in Kenya over time (Muthengi, 2003). Among the Maasai and Turkana for example, girls for a long time have been seen as a means of providing wealth (dowry) as well as providing labour to the parents. It has been an upward task to for the government to ensure education for the girls, especially when there was no legal framework to enforce it (Kajiado, 2000). Among the Maasai, elders claimed that education of girls negatively impacts on their society as girls learn to make their own choices. This results to impediments when attempting to guarantee education for girls; who do not therefore access the same measure of education as the boys.

The low percentage of girls who managed to access basic education in Kenya still encounter barriers in their pursuit of education. These include early marriages, sexual harassment by the boys and teachers, poverty, lack of self esteem, lack of gendered facilities as well as encouragement to continue with education (MOE, 2000). The Ministry of Education had hence to come up with tools for combating the barriers so that both boys and girls could access education equitably. This has been identified as a tool for combating poverty and should be everyone's right (Kajiado, 2000). Lack of education for women means that they have little self-esteem and cannot make decisions or choices.

Among the Maasai where girls have remained a lot less educated, even the choice of marriage partners is dictated. This is in some degree a contrast of the Kikuyu women in Laikipia who form their own groups and are able to coordinate decisions on access and use of resources (McMichael, 2004).

Women should therefore access education opportunities, manipulate their own economic, political and socio-biological positioning without which their progress will slow down or virtually stop. Their development strategies will likewise remain unmet (McMichael, 2004). A lot remains to be seen and achieved because women consist of over a half of the Kenyan population yet its only another half of them are in some occupations. They still have to break the vicious cycle against various barriers; otherwise decisions affecting them are left to the men. Women in Kenya continue to struggle against this injustice through strategies such as education which is pertinent for making decisions, improving their living standards and gaining a bigger voice. This will be at family, community, work and the public arena levels. Education and other skills are vital for empowerment of women to fully participate in policy-making and implementation; and barriers must be eliminated to bring this to a reality (Muthengi, 2003).

4.2 Training

Training & Development is a learning process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes to enhance performance. Schuler (2000) define training as a process of improving an employee's skills to perform current job, while development is improving employee's knowledge to perform jobs in the future. A good leader also has a vision and a roadmap on how to get there. Continual self-improvement for themselves therefore will make good leaders, coaches and mentors, allowing them to increasingly grow, career wise. The scholars argue that the need for training is determined by performance deficiency, real or assumed factors that militate against pertinent women appointments and performance in leadership positions. Onsongo (2006) argues that the problem of gender imbalances can be traced back to school and University enrolment. As strategies to overcome barriers in women's participation and representation in decision-making, the importance of training and capacity building cannot be underestimated.

Given the dynamics and expectations at decision-making levels, it is critical to enhance the capacity of women to deliver when they are appointed to leadership and decision-making positions. Leadership skill programmes should be designed for women with a focus on performance and ascension, public speaking, organization and community development as well as budgeting among others. Such skills' enhancement must be regular and sustainable to prevent a backlash (Onubogu, 2007). Further, and according to Andela, et al, (2008), women need to learn specific, high level skills such as organizational management, leadership fundamentals, skill transfer and accountability. Leadership coaching on how to be an effective leader and how to market oneself for promotion is needed to compensate for weaknesses in current training modules available in the African continent. These focus almost exclusively on how to get to the top but not on how to become effective once there. Greater emphasis on self-improvement through access to training opportunities such as e-learning and evening/weekend classes would encourage continued skills acquisition. Training in lobbying and negotiation skills would empower women with the skills needed to rally support around an issue or manage conflicts. Educating women in time management, behavior, and presentation skills (i.e. how to dress, how to choose a language of communication) would also be a great asset to future women leaders. Proposal writing, speech writing, speech delivery, and self-expression are all key leadership skills. Women should be enabled, through education and training, to communicate their visions in their organizations, their families, communities and to the country as a whole in order to accede to leadership positions.

4.3 The Kenyan situation

According to the World Bank report, 2003, leadership in Kenya reveals a disproportionate focus on the challenges faced by women in their quest to run for office and higher or expanded levels of leadership. These challenges relate to dynamics around lack of education and training, gender roles and socio-cultural stereotypes as well as institutionalized biases against women. The literature also reveals that opportunities exist in both theory and practice on strategies aimed at overcoming these challenges. This is particularly the empowerment school of thought that seeks to diminish dependency of women by increasing their various capabilities. Women in Kenya are to a large extent disadvantaged by low levels of education, limitation in skills among other challenges (Mitullah, 2003). According to Mangatu, (2010), women in Kenya may have increased in the labor force with time but there are still very few at the top echelons of public decision and policy making positions as in the important sector shown below:

Women leadership in the ministries in Kenya.

Table 1: Women Representation at the ministerial level

Job Group	male	Female	Total	% female
President	1	-	1	-
Vice President	1	-	1	-
Prime Minister	1	-	1	-
Deputy PM	2	-	2	-
Ministers	34	6	40	15.0
Assistant Ministers	46	6	52	11.5
PS	37	7	44	15.9
P and above(Executive)	1377	350	1727	20.3
Total	1499	369	1868	19.8

Source: Ministry of gender bi-annual report, December 2009

At 19.8% representation in the policy making levels of the government, it becomes pertinent that important strategies have to be sought if the aforementioned issues affecting the country will be sorted out. According to a UNIFEM baseline report; 'Women representation and participation in the public and private sectors in Kenya' (2010), one of the issues responsible for the underrepresentation of women across the sectors is lack of knowledge and training which should be enhanced.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study adopted exploratory research design. This is used to obtain information on a current phenomenon that exists in respect to the variables under investigation; the conditions in a certain situation and their correlation (Sekeran and Bougie, 2010, Kothari 2009, Nachmias and Nachmias, 2008). In Kenya, the design has been used to study other issues such as Ogutu's (2012) 'impact of Business environmental factors on marketing of general insurance products in Kenya'. Ireri (2010) and others conducted a study on VCT information in Kenya adopting the design but hardly any was found on women leadership. The study therefore used the design in exploring the phenomenon.

5.1.1 Population

For this study, the population consisted of non elected women leaders in the public sector in Kenya. This is because the study aims at investigating long-term strategies that women should adopt to accede to leadership and targets the sector that makes public policies that affect the entire country.

The study population from which the sample was drawn consisted of women in the civil service, parastatals, judiciary, foreign missions, public administration and local governments.

5.1.2 Research Instruments

Data was collected by use of self administered questionnaires, which, according to Cooper and Schindler (2006) are recommended in descriptive studies. Self administered questionnaires are free of bias since they are respondent-only based and the respondents were sought conveniently. A 5-point likert scale was used to obtain the ordinal data (Kannan and Aulbur, 2004). Structured interview schedules were also used for in-depth interviews that would enrich the study.

5.1.3 Data Analysis

Pearson product moment Correlation coefficient is used for data that is collected using an interval/ratio scale and is normally distributed while spearman's rho coefficient of correlation will be used where data will be found to be categorical. In this study, the coefficients were used to test the relationship between the dependent variable (acceding to leadership (Kivaa, 2000).

Simple linear regression analysis was carried out to determine the form of the mathematical model that defines the relationship between the dependent variable and the significant independent variable previously determined through correlation analysis. Simple linear regression was chosen because it provides a rich and flexible framework that suits the needs of many analysts (Montgomery, 2006). The following simple linear regression model was used to model the data:

$$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where,

Y is Acceding to Leadership

X_1 is education levels

For qualitative analysis, thematic approach (Boyatzis, 1998) was used to encode the qualitative information. According to Pearson (2010), thematic analysis involves searching through the data to identify recurrent patterns. Codes (words) were developed for each theme to get close to the data and develop deep appreciation of the contents. Each theme was hence reported accordingly.

6.0 Procedure

The study was conducted in the public sector in Kenya. Three hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to the different sectors in the public sector; the government ministries, state corporations and Universities. The question items assessed the educational environments of the respondents, their facilitators, mentors if any as well as the materials of instruction. The questions on the questionnaire were on 5 point lickert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree to strongly disagree. Ten ladies across the board were also interviewed by use of the semi-structured interview guides for in-depth information.

Two hundred and five of those distributed were collected back, well documented, for analysis. The respondents were senior women employees in the organizations at the levels referred to as leadership levels in the public sector in Kenya. These are job groups N to U in the civil service and

provincial administration, grades 13 to 18 in the universities, grades 7 to 1 in the parastatals and local government as well as the principal magistrate to chief justice in the judicial services of Kenya. The data was regressed and correlated on the basis of the two variables; the extent to which the independent variable (education) impacts on the dependent variable (leadership). The in-depth interview was thematically analyzed.

7.0 Quantitative Analysis

Regression analysis and Co-efficient

Regression analysis

The following simple linear regression model was fitted to the data: $Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$
 The regression results were as shown below:

Table 3 Coefficients

Model				t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
1	Education	.404	.050	8.093	.000

From table 3 above, the regression coefficients was positive (0.404) and significant (p-value <0.05)

Table 4 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15428.508	1	15428.508	65.498	.000
	Residual	4004.492	17	235.558		
	Total	19433.000	18			

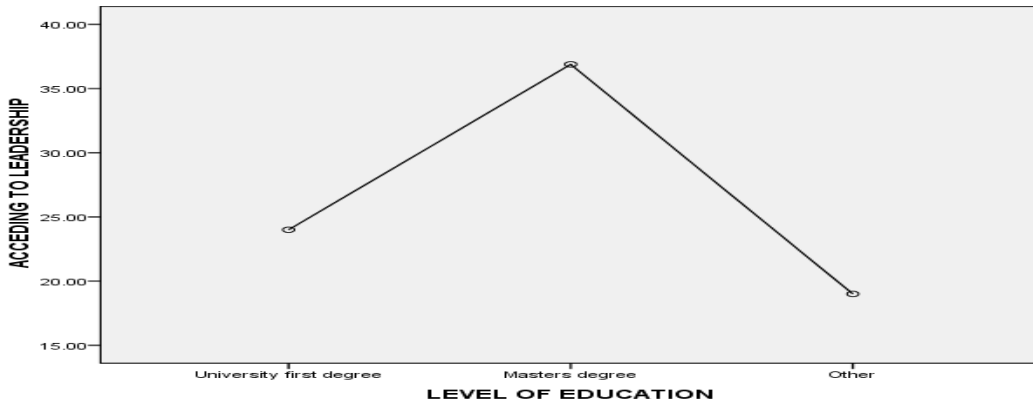
The table above revealed that the overall regression model fits the data well since the p-value <0.005

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficient was determined to assess the strength of the linear relationship between education and acceding to leadership

		Education	Acceding to leadership
Educaverage	Pearson Correlation	1	0.891
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.043
	N	205	205

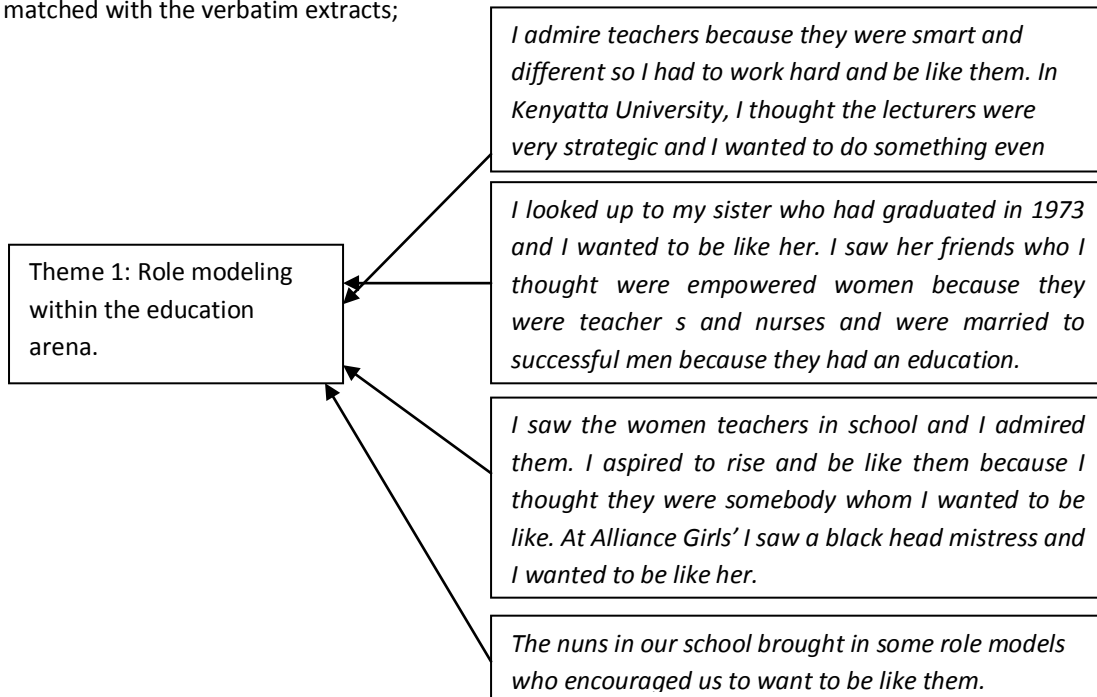
The results in the table above reveal that there is significantly strong positive linear relationship between education and acceding to leadership as further shown by the means graph below:

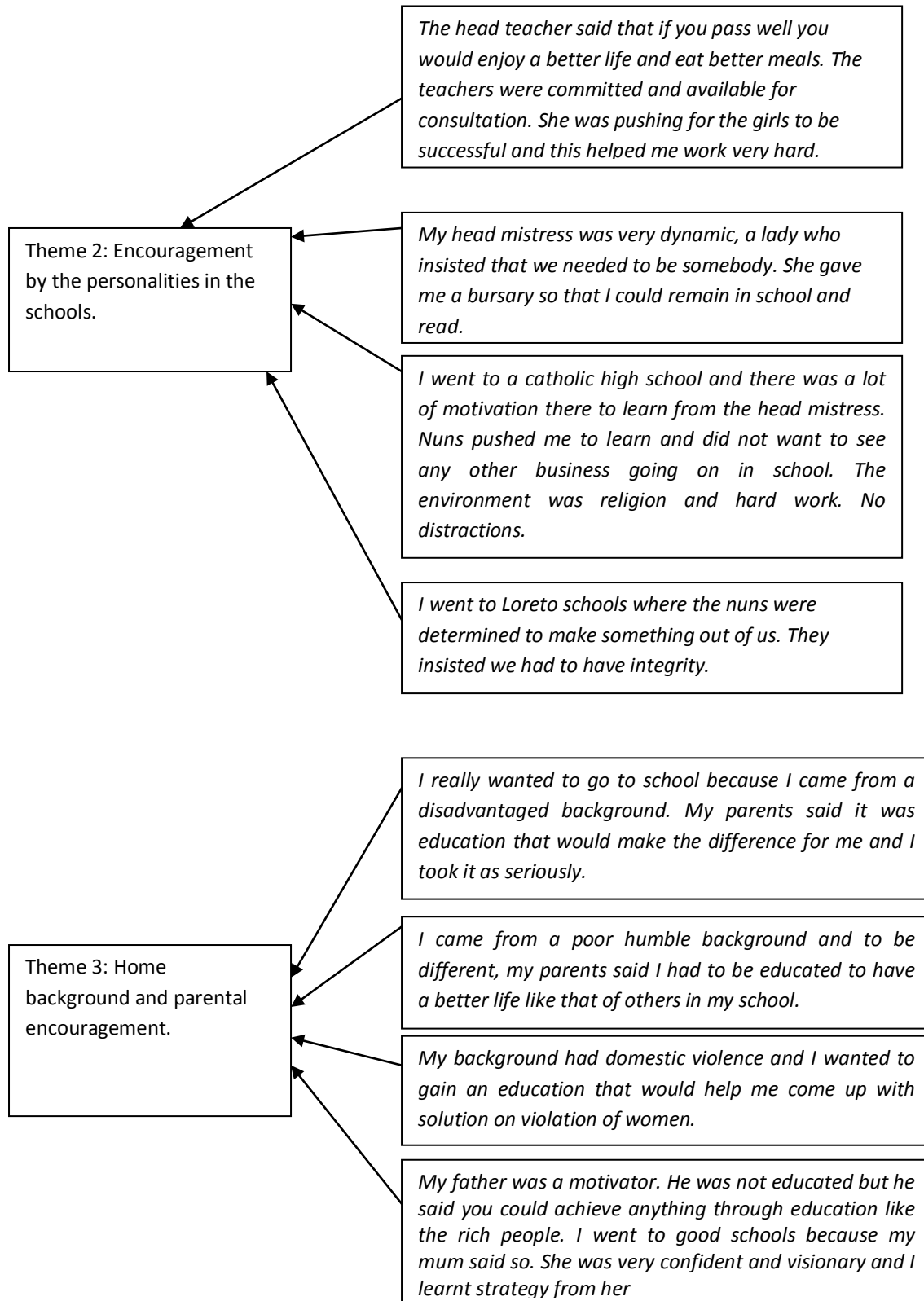


There is steady growth to leadership levels as one move from the first degree to Masters level. Other qualifications may not influence the mobility especially the lower levels of education such as the diplomas and certificates. Only a few respondents had PhD levels of education. This agrees with some findings in literature that it is a certain level of education, combined with other factors that will lead to success in leadership.

8.0 Qualitative analysis

Among the many techniques of qualitative analysis is thematic analysis which generates themes locatable before the final analysis. The following education and training themes were identified and matched with the verbatim extracts;





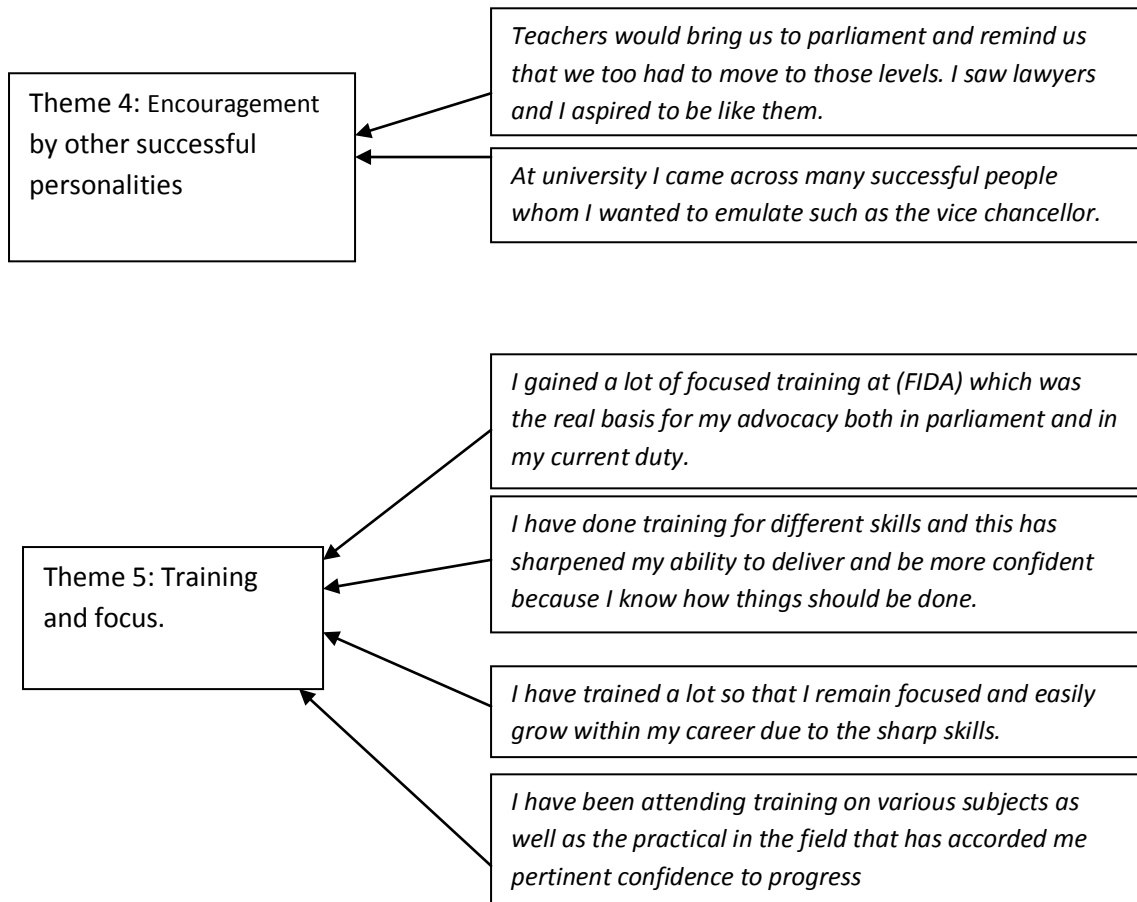


Figure 1: Themes and extracts.

Based on the verbatim extracts fitted into the education and training sub-themes above, it was found that education and training have contributed to women ascending to leadership in Kenya; as in the quantitative analysis, from different perspectives. The testimonies by the various interviewees have been condensed as shown above. The basic findings are that the women leaders had educated models as they pursued their education who they wanted to emulate. The leaders were fortunate enough as to have personalities within the schools who encouraged them to keep moving on, mostly the very committed teachers and head teachers. A number of them came from humble, poor backgrounds but were in schools with more fortunate pupils and this pushed them to want as good a life. This was only going to be achievable through an education.

It was possible from the schools to visit places such as the parliament where the successful personalities again became the role models; the encouragement to get an education that would ensure they succeed as much. The successful personalities in the universities further pushed the girls to want that education. The training gained after the formal education either formally or informally was the sharpening tool that provided the impetus for further growth to leadership.

Results and discussions

Education and acceding to leadership for women

From the above analysis, there is a strong correlation between having an education and growing into leadership at a positive correlation $r=0.891$ and $p=0.000$. The investigation as to whether education

and training is a successful strategy adopted by women to accede to leadership positions in the public sector in Kenya is positively supported by the analysis. The aspects of education that contributed to this success are evident from the qualitative analysis, that education was what was going to make the difference for the women, to give them the impetus to get to where other successful people were.

Conclusion

Education is one of the successful strategies women in Kenya must acceded to rise to leadership levels. According to this study, the two are positively and strongly correlated. It is the tool that leads other leaders to access the educated person for certain positions in leadership because the person has something to offer especially where decisions need to be made. This is according to one of the respondents interviewed. Though there has been some improvements in women inclusion in leadership in certain sectors in the public sector in Kenya, the disparity is still glaring. This frustrates the clamour for gender equality and empowerment of women, even through education because decisions regarding such issues as curriculum, textbook as well as the education environments are made in a gender biased forums. Unless the barriers that are brought about by such issues are eliminated, women education may not be easily dealt with, yet remains a pertinent ingredient for acceding to leadership

As stated by the United fourth World conference on Women (1995), it is creation of an environment in which women and girls are accorded education opportunities, freedom of thought and non-stereotypical images that will create a ground that encourages women development. Women with education go on to have great autonomy when it comes to decision-making process that involves choices; a pertinent ingredients of leadership (Mareng, 2010). Women need to be educated and trained so as to have a sense of self esteem and avoid decisions being made for them about their lives. Through education, they will not only access leadership levels but also be able to decide on their social and biological standpoints (McMicheal, 2004).

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