

Major Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Educational Leadership: A Case of Bhutan

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Abstract

The number of women assuming educational administration roles such as the head of departments, academic coordinators, principals and vice principals is very negligible or minimal in the Bhutanese educational context. This research is therefore, aimed towards identifying the critical factors affecting the participation of women in educational leadership positions in Bhutan, and exploring and recommending relevant strategies or possible interventions to encourage more participation of women in educational leadership positions.

The research study is primarily descriptive in nature; interview questionnaires were distributed to 35 respondents who were pre-selected using non-probability sampling method from which only 21 respondents participated in the study. The respondents included female teachers and women principals from 5 schools and 4 women leaders under Ministry of Education in Thimphu. A set of interview questions consisting of both open ended and closed ended questions were used for the respondents to fill up and return in person or through emails. The qualitative data obtained from the interview schedules was analyzed and recorded in hard copy during the work in progress phase. It was later compiled and after the compilation, spreadsheet and word document, supported by thematic analysis coding, was used to analyze the data.

The study findings revealed that the under-representation of women in leadership positions is due to the gender biases shown in favor of males and against women, with the assumption that women are weak and do not have the required potential and capability to lead. The findings further specifically indicated that there are too few role models or mentors in the system, policies addressing gender imbalance are not implemented in the system, and poor or no incentives for women to take up leadership positions from the authorities. On top of all, socio-cultural factors such as family responsibilities, lack of confidence, no gender equity in assigning leadership positions and women being weaker sex affect women to take up leadership position in education.

Based on the findings, some of the policy interventions such as equal representation of male and female candidates, institution of mentor-mentee programs, better incentives, introduction of women or gender sensitization programs are recommended.

The study therefore found out that in Bhutan, women have not received equal treatment in terms of availing opportunities for leadership positions. Hence, a fewer women leaders in the Ministry of Education.

Keywords: Women; Leadership; Bhutan

Introduction

This study is aimed at exploring the major factors affecting women's participation in educational leadership in Bhutan. However, owing to the limited Bhutanese literature on women educational leaders, literature on contemporary women leadership and the leadership practices of women in both general and educational leadership positions in developing countries of Asia and Africa are explored to compare and analyze the context of Bhutanese women in educational leadership positions.

Chapter one therefore, presents the research background and the research problem. It further exposes the research questions, the general purpose and objectives of the study, and the significance, scope and limitations of the study.

Background of the Study

There still exists prejudices in conferring power positions and privileges. Studies have revealed that women in most countries still live under male dominance where power is concentrated in males; and women's role and responsibility is confined to family and household works. History states that the exclusion of females from workforce openly began in the days of the industrial revolution of the 19th century when the factory employers tended to categorize females as capable of "females work" positions only that existed in relatively few occupations and ranked them amongst those with the lowest status and compensations [1].

Sperandio (2007) brings forth his opinion to justify the importance of women educational leaders when he claimed that the presence of women in educational leadership contributes greatly to the sensitivity within educational institutions that helps to promote not only the wellbeing of females but also provide aspiring women with appropriate role models in leadership and management.

It has been found that in Bhutan women enjoy equality and freedom with men compared to women in other countries. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan respects gender equality and does not allow gender discrimination (Bhutan, 2008). Whatever acts, rules and policies in place are, the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions in Bhutan, including politics, is very negligible. Men have been dominating the social system in Bhutan for decades. There are currently only 25

women in the executive levels as opposed to 228 men [2]. There are only about five women holding constitutional posts, and only 10 women representatives against 62 men in the current parliament. The situation is no better in local government, with only 103 representatives out of more than 1,400. There are fewer Bhutanese women making decisions in areas of development pursuit and on state policies and programs influencing the government and public decision-making.

The research problem

As per the Country Meters (Jan. 2016), the population of Bhutan was estimated to be 781168 people and the male-female ratio is 1.126 (1126 males per 1000 females) which is slightly higher than global sex ratio of 1016 males to 1000 females as of 2015. Although females form a critical portion of the total human population in Bhutan, they are inadequately represented in leadership and management positions in public and private institutions. The possible explanation for this situation could be that gender issues have not received due attention and only in the recent years a few researchers have begun to document women's participation in politics and democracy, and in local governance in Bhutan.

The poor representation of women has been a concern for many and as such the need to have a balanced representation of women in leadership and management position is felt very important. When both men and women representations are taken into consideration for better decision making it is believed to ensure an equitable and sustainable development.

This research will thus try to investigate, why only fewer women are found in educational leadership positions in Bhutan, and identify possible strategies that can be used to enhance women's participation in educational leadership.

Research questions

The study sought to address the following research questions:

- What are the major factors affecting women's participation in educational leadership in Bhutan?
- What strategies are in place to promote women's participation in educational leadership and management?
- Can women bring more change than men as educational leaders in the Bhutanese education system?

The purpose of the study

General purpose

This study was carried out to assess the major factors that prevent women to pursue educational leadership positions at different educational administration levels, particularly in schools.

Specific objectives

With regard to the specific objectives, the research was an attempt to:

- Investigate the factors that affect women's participation in educational leadership position in Bhutan.
- Identify relevant strategies to promote women's participation in educational leadership and management position in Bhutan.
- Assess the effectiveness of leadership between women and men in terms of bringing positive impacts in the Bhutanese education system.

Significance of the study

This study will have both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, different stakeholders can use the analysis done in this study to create awareness and understanding about the major factors affecting women's participation in the educational leadership and administration. The research findings can also be used as a secondary data for researchers who will conduct similar researches in the future.

In the practical sense, the country will benefit from the research in such a way that Bhutanese women will develop good perception towards competing equally with their male counterparts in their engagement to leadership and decision-making roles. Hence, this study will have the following importance:

- Help to educate and increase the participation of women in educational leadership roles.
- Identify the major factors and self-limiting beliefs of women for participating in educational leadership positions, And
- Provide relevant interventions and strategies to reduce the de-motivating factors that discourage women from participating in educational leadership and management.

Limitations of the study

The researcher faced the following problems during the course of the study.

- Some targeted respondents were not available due to emerging personal and professional commitments and thus it necessitated emergency substitution.
- Respondents were drawn from selected private and public schools and the Ministry of Education headquarter within Thimphu district only.
- Due to stringent policies of disallowing dissemination of information to outsiders, some important information and highlights were withheld by the organizations

Scope of the study

The study was confined only to female teachers (aspiring leaders) and women leaders of selected public and private schools under the Department of School Education, and other selected women educational leaders in the Ministry of Education headquarters in Thimphu. The study involved semi-structured interviews with women educational leaders in schools and the ministry headquarter. The focus on competent senior level female teachers, women principals and senior women leaders at the Ministry of Education headquarter was to enable or ensure a generous conclusion through their varied leadership experience, qualifications and skills.

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviewed literature works from relevant fields of study such as textbooks, journals, magazines, the internet and previous research works related to the study to help justify concepts and issues related to leadership and management – specifically women educational leadership. This helped to clarify, strengthen and accordingly direct each stage of the research project from the formulation of the research topic to the evaluation, dissemination and utilization of the research findings.

This chapter looked into some profound concepts and issues concerning women and leadership – especially focusing on factors affecting women's participation in educational leadership from the perspective of socio-cultural and individual factors,

leadership qualities and career experiences of women in education administration, and overcoming the barriers or strategies to encourage more women participation in educational leadership. The number of women in educational leadership positions is fairly negligible compared to the number of men. Although there have been efforts to open opportunities to female educators towards educational leadership, the majority of educational leadership positions are still filled in by men.

Women's Leadership qualities and leadership styles

According to Marshall [3], women who take up educational administrators are more attuned to teaching, curriculum, instruction and children, perhaps because they spend more time as mothers at home before they become teachers in schools.

According to the study conducted by Caliper - a Princeton-based management consulting firm, 'women leaders are more emphatic and influential demonstrating a stronger need to get things done, and are more willing to take risks than male leaders' [4].

Further studies have revealed that women leaders are significantly stronger than male leaders in terms of persuasive motivation, assertiveness, empathy, urgency, flexibility and sociability and willingness to take risk. These skills possessed by women leaders enable them to understand situations better and more accurately, and take in information from all sides thereby making them effective leaders.

Conner, [5] commented that women leaders who have the authority, use their power and positions to influence the followers and more importantly improve the organization. This exposes that fact that women leaders understand the essence of empowering their followers (sharing power) which will enhance trust and bring positive gains within the organization.

Education or school settings are filled with learners or young children with expectations of love, care, support and mentorship, and this setting invites or suits better to feminine rather than masculine leadership behavior. Female are characterized as being sensitive, empathetic, intuitive, compromising, caring, cooperative, and accommodative and these qualities are often associated with effective administration [6]. Rosener [7] claims that female leadership style is often 'interactive leadership' which involves encouraging participation, sharing power and information, enhancing people's self-worth; changing self-interests for an overall good, relating power to interpersonal skills; and believing in team performance.

Various tasks and responsibilities

The UN report on 'women in leadership roles' claim that gender stereotypes and traditional conservative beliefs that a woman's place is at home raising a family, and that women are followers, not leaders, prevent women from participating in leadership and public life. Examples and instances in a number of countries reveal that due to the absence of institutional arrangements and facilities to support the combination of work-family responsibilities, women often select certain types or sectors of work and lower levels of responsibility because it allows them to balance their work and family lives [8].

The different personal and professional responsibilities, especially the demanding family and home responsibilities, do not align well to the personal and organizational goals, and therefore, this impacts on the progress or growth of women leaders since women have to adjust and accommodate various needs and commitments [9].

Besides carrying out the role of an administrator or leader, women also perform social or family roles and responsibilities of being a mother, sister, wife and student, and this hinders in their leadership involvement and performance. Female leaders therefore undergo a lot of pressure in order to meet both the personal and professional commitments which can sometimes be very stressful and force them to fall out of balance.

Role model, mentor and network

Very few role models

The lack of opportunity for women to learn from other women leaders or role models who have successful experiences in leadership and management has been cited as a reason why women have not moved into administrative positions in larger numbers [9]. The non-availability or existence of only a few female role models creates large vacuum thus leaving aspiring female to look mostly at the dominant experiences of boys and men (males). Since there is scarcity of women educational leaders as role models, women find it challenging to make decisions about their involvement in educational leadership roles.

Lack of mentor

Mentoring is an arrangement whereby an individual who has experience and knowledge in a particular field can actively guide and offer support to facilitate the learning or development of another person [10]. Females aspiring to take up leadership

and administrative roles often lack the opportunity to attend professional development and leadership/management trainings and do not have good mentors to guide them in their learning process. As such they are not able to recognize their own strengths and capabilities to become a leader.

Poor network

Networking is the art of building relationships. Networking is an essential skill required for leaders to succeed not only for personal gains but more importantly to professional growth and organizational success. In governing an institution, we need the cooperation of people working at different stages. But, if there is acceptance in sex discrimination the women leaders will find it difficult to lead and manage. Effective leadership besides having a strong network within the organization as well as outside also need to develop and maintain/sustain the connections within the network.

Socio-cultural factors affecting women leadership

Socio-cultural factors such as gender stereotype, government policies, individual rights, culture, religion and politics pose barriers for women to undertake leadership roles.

Individual factors such as negative attitude by women themselves to occupy leadership positions and fear of criticisms, lack of self-esteem and self-confidence hinder women’s participation in educational leadership and management at various levels. The impact of such factors is however moderated by intervening variables such as experience and income.

It is important for societies to realize that the negative criticisms affect women’s morale of taking up leadership roles and make them hate management positions. Appreciation and support by men and the government through sound policies will avoid discrimination against women which is one of the leading factors to women’s access to management positions or avoidance of leadership positions.

Low Self-confidence and self-esteem

Women’s obstacle to themselves often comes in the form of internalized oppression which means that women fear and do not stand up to overcoming the fear of venturing into performing leadership roles due to discrimination and sex-role stereotypes against them. According to [11] if we don’t have the required self-confidence or self-belief then we tend to doubt ourselves and our capabilities, and glue to the things which we feel are comfortable

or safe instead of challenging our innate capabilities. Further, due to the poor self-confidence and the social stigma indicating that women are weak, they seldom venture out to apply or compete for the available positions in leadership and management.

Strategies to advance women’s career

Due to emerging needs and rapid advancement in education in the 21st century, there has been a great interest to explore various strategies to further strengthen and develop effective delivery and management of the education’s services. One such priority area was to look at the role of women in educational leadership.

The leadership quality of the leader, especially in education, is very crucial because it is believed that education has no second chance and thus no room for failure. The leadership quality of a leader makes a huge difference not only in the growth and development of the school but more importantly in enhancing the progress and outcome of the learners.

In order to advance women’s career in educational leadership and management positions, strategies such as mentoring, undergoing professional and leadership trainings, building and maintaining effective networks, inclusiveness and transparency are found to be powerful strategies to help women develop their leadership skills.

Theoretical/conceptual framework

The framework depicting the concepts of the study is summarized below.

Methodology

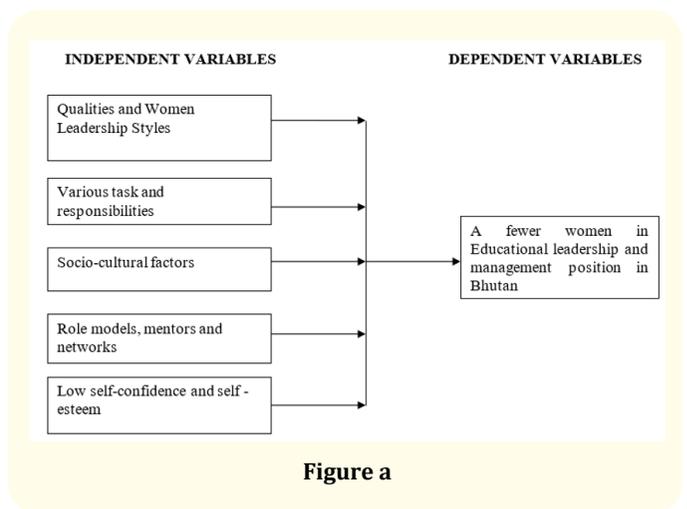


Figure a

Introduction

This chapter looked at revealing the major factors affecting women's participation in educational leadership through interviews and questionnaires. A qualitative approach has been used to understand the role of Bhutanese women as educational leaders and the major factors affecting their participation in such leadership positions. The method used is based on the local social context drawn in from real life experiences through non-probability sampling, interviews and informal survey. A qualitative research method is used to study and explore the role of Bhutanese women and factors affecting their participation in educational leadership and management

Positions in Bhutan. The use of this approach is aimed towards achieving the objectives stated in chapter one of this study.

Research design

The purpose of the study is to assess the major factors affecting women's participation in educational leadership and recommend relevant strategies or interventions to encourage more participation of women in educational leadership positions in Bhutan. Semi structured interviews, questionnaires and review of documents for type of themes were employed in this study. The reason for selecting the semi-structured interview is because it helps to find out the perspectives of different individuals with the use of both open and closed questions and define the area to be explored and further help to triangulate the validity of the information with the questionnaire. The selected design being subjective describes the problem from the point of view of those experiencing it, and has more in-depth information on a few cases. It is assumed that the method used is economical since it enables to describe the prevailing situation qualitatively which will eventually help to draw valid general conclusion or analysis.

Source of data

The source of data is inclusive of both primary and secondary sources. With respect to primary sources, the researcher interviewed and collected information from the women participants (educational leaders) currently serving with the Ministry of Education headquarters and selected female teachers and women principals of public and private schools in Thimphu district. On the other hand, the secondary sources such as books, reports, journals, and magazines and other relevant information or documents available online through internet were used.

Data collection techniques

Before collecting the data from the respondents, the researcher ensured that the participants granted their consent or agreement to participate in the study. The potential study participants who were selected based on non-probability sampling, were informed about the procedures involved in the study, the risks and benefits of participating in the study, and their rights as study participants.

During the data collection stage and other related activities concerning the research, the researcher interacted positively with the respondents through prior approvals. This was done by informing in advance and developing positive relationship with relevant authorities and explaining clearly the purpose of the research. The researcher showed respect for the values, opinions and suggestions of the participants and relevant authorities. On top of all, the researcher sought prior approval to visit offices by writing to designated authorities. After getting approval for the above-mentioned procedures, the researcher scheduled time and conducted interviews with the respondents. The researcher managed and allowed the required time and space for the participants to attend the interview as per their convenience.

Reliability and validity

Checking the validity and reliability of data collecting instruments before providing the actual study subject is the core to assure the quality of the data. Thus, to ensure validity, the required instruments were developed under close guidance of the supervisor with whom the consultation of the relevant literature was carried out as well.

Accordingly, to make the data more valid and reliable and also to avoid ambiguity and unclear statements, the draft interview questionnaire were first developed and examined with the peer group of masters' students at RIM. Based on their comments and feedback, some modification was made on the questionnaire to make it clear and precise for the main respondents so as to obtain the most reliable information.

Sampling techniques

An unbiased random selection is important in drawing conclusions from the results of a study. Thus, the random sampling technique and non-probability sampling techniques were both employed to select the primary sources of data. In doing so, each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected

as subject or there is some judgment involved and not everyone has the chance of being selected. The entire process of sampling was done in a single step with each subject selected independently of the other members of the population.

Data analysis and interpretation

The data collected through the aforementioned instruments were categorized and organized by themes according to their conceptual similarity and presented in prose according to the research objectives of this study. The qualitative data obtained from the interview schedules was analyzed and recorded in hard copy during the work in progress phase. It was later compiled and after the compilation, spreadsheet and word document, supported by thematic analysis coding, was used to analyze the data. Tables are used to draw specific conclusions or analysis for the closed ended questions used in the interview on demographics and other related information.

Ethical considerations

Research ethics refers to the type of agreement that the researcher enters into with his or her research participants or respondents, and it is important for researchers to be aware and attend to the ethical considerations related to the research.

Prior to data collection from study participants, the researcher ensured that the participants’ consent or agreement was given willingly (voluntarily) to participate in the study. All potential study participants were informed about the procedures that would be used in the study, the risks and benefits of participating in the study, and their right as study participants. During the data collection phase and other activities related to the research, the researcher made positive interactions with the respondent through clear communication and prior approval. This was enhanced further by building good rapport, by developing positive relationship with relevant authorities and individuals, and by explaining clearly the purpose of the research study. Besides, the researcher also showed respect for the values, opinions and suggestions of the respondents.

Moreover, in order to avoid any psychological harm, questions were framed appropriately to avoid offending and disturbing the participants’ personality. Participants were assured that the information they provide would be kept fully confidential and to ensure this, the researcher removed information that required identification details of the respondents.

Data Analysis and Findings

Introduction

This chapter examines the data collected through interviews. Further, it also presents and discusses the findings of the study. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews was prepared using spreadsheet and word documents.

Characteristics of the sample

A total of 35 respondents were provided with interview questionnaires. Only 21 respondents completed the interview questionnaires. There was a coverage of 60 percent (n = 21) response rate of which was considered adequate representation of the population to make conclusions. Respondents comprising of female teachers (non-leaders) accounted for 42.8 percent (n = 9) while women leaders accounted for 57.2 percent (n = 12). These findings are represented in the table below.

Grouping	Frequency	Percent
Female Teachers	9	42.8
Women Leaders	12	57.2
Total	21	100

Table 1: Number of respondents and gender.

From the interview, the respondents are composed of 19 percent (n = 4) holders of master’s degree, 28.6 percent (n = 6) holders of post graduate diploma in education, 42.9 percent (n = 9) Bachelor of education degree, and 9.5 percent (n = 2). Primary training certificate. This is reflected in the table below.

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Masters	4	19.0
PGCE/PGDE	6	28.6
B. Ed	9	42.9
PTC	2	9.5
Total	21	100

Table 2: Qualifications of the respondents.

In terms of work experiences, it was observed that 14.3 percent (n = 3) of respondents have worked for between 0-5 years, 23.8 percent (n = 5) for 6-10 years, 33.3 percent (n = 7) for 11-15 years, 28.6 percent (n = 6) for 16-20 years. This is reflected in the table below.

Duration	Frequency	Percent
0-5 years	3	14.3
6-10 years	5	23.8
11-15 years	7	33.3
16-20 years	6	28.6
Total	21	100

Table 3: Work experience.

Greatest barriers for females to achieve leadership positions in education

All 21 respondents responded to this question with a variety of barriers for female to take up leadership roles. Of the 21 respondents, 14.3 percent (n = 3) of them stated that there is no barrier for females in the context of Bhutan. However, 85.7 percent (n = 18) respondents said that there are major barriers or hurdles for females to ascend to leadership position in Bhutan. Their responses are grouped under following themes of barriers:

- Absence of role models and mentors
- Women shouldering multiple responsibilities both at home and school
- Low self-confidence in females
- Social and cultural factors
- Organizational factors

Mentor and role model influence

As evident from the first question, of the total participants, 76.2 percent (n = 16) respondents expressed of not having any mentor or role model to emulate in their career. However, they also expressed that having a female role model and a strong mentor are very much necessary without whom one cannot become and effective women leader. For them, having a mentor allows enough space to enhance trust, freedom, creativity and empowerment which are essential qualities of a good leader. However, 23.8 percent (n = 5) respondents did not consider mentoring and role modeling as having any impact or influence in their leadership roles and capacities.

Life experiences impacting on decisions to become a leader in education

Life experiences are very crucial to grow well and understand better about the realities of life. 71.4 percent (n = 15) of the

respondents agreed that life experiences such as assuming leadership roles as students or since childhood, shouldering leadership responsibilities as student leaders, parental expectations and support, and opportunities to learn from theories, practical examples and through imitation helped them to become educational leader later in their life. However, 28.6 percent (n = 6) respondents expressed that more than the life experiences it is the ambience and environment that create opportunities for people to learn and grow well, that makes them effective leaders later.

Incentives by government to women leaders

In the context of Bhutan, 100 percent (n = 21) respondents aggressively said that the government or the concerned Ministry of Education does not provide any incentives to women to take up educational leadership positions in schools. Further, 85.7 percent (n = 18) respondents said that the government’s policy of 6 months maternity leave in a way is an obstacle for women to ascend to leadership position in education. Their opinions are that the Ministry of Education hereafter may not select women leaders through interview fearing of long maternity leave which will have impact on the school they are placed.

Social cultural hindrances to women

All the 21 respondents said that there is a cultural hindrance in Bhutan for women to take up leadership position in Bhutan. 47.6 percent (n = 10) respondents said that women in Bhutan are viewed as capable for shouldering only family responsibilities such as caring children and old parents. 23.8 percent (n = 5) are of the opinion that women are looked down as having low confidence and who can only play secondary roles. And 28.6 percent (n = 6) respondents shared that women in Bhutan are viewed as having no bravery or great physical ability to take up leadership position, which in a way is being discriminated as weaker sex. Thus, social cultural hindrances often play pivotal role in sidelining women in Education for leadership position.

Organization culture inhibiting women to top leadership position

When respondents were asked about the organization culture inhibiting women to take up leadership position in Education, 76.2 percent (n = 16) respondents said that the organization culture does discourage women to take up leadership position in Education. They cited that when nominations were made, male teachers were given better preferences, be it for invigilators for examinations or

evaluation camps for paper checking. They are also of the view that female teachers are given lesser important tasks in the schools than male teachers as the organization deem them as not having adequate time due to family obligations. However, 23.8 percent (n = 5) are of the view that there is no inhibition to women in taking up leadership position due to organization culture. Their justification is that it could be female teachers themselves not opening up or not interacting dynamically within the given environment.

Equal leadership positions to women

The respondents when asked about the equal opportunities for leadership position in Education, 76.2 percent (n = 16) respondents said that there is no equality in terms of opportunities for leadership position between male and female. They said that male teachers are given preferences while shortlisting. However, 23.8 percent (n = 5) respondents said that women themselves do not portray of being capable for leadership positions. Their justification is that female teachers themselves are not opening up or not interacting dynamically within the given environment.

Strategies in place to encourage women's participation in educational leadership

The respondents when asked about the prevailing strategies of the Ministry of Education to encourage women's participation in educational leadership shared that there is no such strategy in place to encourage women. 100 percent (n = 21) said that the Ministry of Education has not looked into setting up some sort of strategies to encourage women to take up leadership position. The respondents also shared that there is no such policy to encourage young aspiring female teachers to take up leadership position. Further, the respondents also shared that there is a need to revisit the education policy.

Leadership Effectiveness between male and female leaders

On this questionnaire, 90.5 percent (n = 19) respondents immediately responded by saying that females make better leaders than males in the educational settings. The justification on females being better leaders than men was that the female leaders are more sensitive to students, subordinates, colleagues and partners. Further, the respondents also shared that female leaders are more empathetic, more intuitive and compromising, more caring and accommodative than male leaders. However, 9.5 percent (n = 2) respondents remained neutral and these respondents said that they have no comments on the leadership effectiveness.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter encapsulates the findings of the study, present the conclusion and recommendations to the findings on 'major factors affecting women's participation in educational leadership in Bhutan.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate the major factors affecting women's participation in educational leadership in Bhutan. The study focused on 9 female teachers and 12 female educational leaders under the Ministry of Education, of which two female leaders were from private schools in Bhutan. Further, this research was also carried out to assess the effectiveness of leadership between male and female.

The study involved 21 respondents drawn from different schools and organizations such as Department of Youth and Sports, Department of School Education, Department of Adult and Higher Education and UNESCO, Bhutan Program. Data for this research was collected through interview questionnaires. The data gathered was analyzed using spreadsheet and word documents.

Overall findings

The study saw 21 respondents with various experiences as leaders and teachers.

The study revealed that there are great barriers in the Ministry of Education in regard to promoting women to educational leadership. The findings revealed that 85.7 percent (n = 18) respondents were of the opinions that there existed and exist great barriers for women to take up leadership position in the Ministry of Education. The findings further revealed that there are too few role models or mentors in the system. The study revealed that 76.2 percent (n = 16) respondents said that the system does not role model or mentor.

The study also revealed that women learn to be better leaders than men through life's experiences.

71.4 percent (n = 15) respondents shared that the experiences gained from life helped them to be better leaders. It was further revealed that policies addressing gender imbalance are not implemented in the system as 85.7 percent (n = 18) respondents said that the Government's policy on 6 months maternity leave for

women in a way is an obstacle in taking up leadership position. The study therefore established that the Ministry of Education does not provide any incentives to women to take up leadership positions.

The study revealed that socio-cultural factors such as family responsibilities, lack of confidence and women being weaker sex hinder women in taking leadership position the Education. Organization culture of nominating men for invigilators and paper checking are inhibiting factors for women to assume leadership positions. 76.2 percent (n = 16) respondents agree organization culture as obstacle for ascending into leadership position.

The study further revealed that women are discriminated and there is no equality in assigning leadership positions in the Ministry. 76.2 percent (n = 16) voiced their concern on this issue. Further, 100 percent (n = 21) shared that there are no strategies of the Ministry in place to encourage women to take up leadership positions. As a result, women are denied equal leadership position opportunities.

Finally, the study also revealed that women are better leaders than men if given opportunities in life. 90.5 (n = 19) respondents shared that women are better leaders than men as women are more sensitive, more empathetic and more caring their dealings.

The study therefore found out that in Bhutan, women have not received equal treatment in terms of availing opportunities for leadership positions. Hence, a fewer women leaders in the Ministry of Education.

Conclusion

From the study, one can conclude that social cultural factors, organization policies, organization culture, limited access to advanced education and discrimination of women in appointments inhibit the upward mobility of women to top leadership positions [12-20].

Recommendations

On the basis of the research findings the following recommendations are suggested: -

- The Ministry of Education, while floating vacancies for leadership positions in different schools across the kingdom, must ensure that there is equal representation of male and female candidates to have gender equality.

- The Ministry of Education must institute mentor-mentee program so that the aspiring women leaders could learn from senior and seasoned school teacher or women leaders.
- The Ministry of Education must look into providing better incentives such as short immersion program for women leaders, so that many females could aspire to take part in leadership positions. Further, the Ministry of Education must also look into the side effects of the policy of six months maternity leave introduced in 2016.
- The Ministry of Education must introduce women or gender sensitization programs to the general populace on the benefits of women empowerment so that it will create awareness among people on the importance of women's role in decision making.
- Both societal and organizational cultures are barriers that affect women to take up leadership positions. Some societies still hold certain cultural values that are gender discriminatory. Therefore, it is important to promote sound cultural orientation that recognizes women as capable leaders and free people from gender stereotypes.
- The concerned authority or organizations such as the government and the Ministry of Education must promote a culture of equal opportunity for both male and females and revisit or re-evaluate the position/performance guidelines and work place policies including human resource development and management policies to create gender balance.

Conclusion

This research proposal on the major factors affecting women's participation in educational leadership position in Bhutan tried to analyse the extent of women in educational leadership positions in Bhutan.

The study revealed although Bhutanese economy has made a lot of progress in the economic front, yet equality of gender representation in the educational leadership positions is still an area of grave concern - very slow and uneven. To date, the most powerful and best-paid managerial positions are still out of reach for most women. Besides looking at the common constraints or barriers such as unfavorable social, cultural and organizational environments, and lack of necessary motivation and confidence, the research project studied the major factors causing the under

representation or low participation of women in educational leadership position in the Bhutanese context.

The findings of the study revealed that the under-representation of women in leadership positions is due to the gender biases shown in favor of males and against women, with the assumption that women are weak and do not have the required potential and capability to lead. The findings further specifically indicated that there are too few role models or mentors in the system, policies addressing gender imbalance are not implemented in the system, and poor or no incentives for women to take up leadership positions from the authorities. On top of all, socio-cultural factors such as family responsibilities, lack of confidence, no gender equity in assigning leadership positions and women being weaker sex affect women to take up leadership position in education.

Overall, the study indicated that in Bhutan, women have not received equal treatment in terms of availing opportunities for leadership positions. Hence, a fewer women leaders in the Ministry of Education.

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