

Challenges Encountering the Participation of Women in Senior Administrative Status in Higher Education

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Abstract

In recent decades, the number of women participating in higher education has dramatically increased. Women have been participating mainly as students, faculty members, and support staff at higher educational institutions. Research shows that, the number of women is not fairly proportioned in the top administrative positions as compared to men. In addition, women who have the aspiration for administrative positions encounter numerous challenges. On the other hand, the potentiality of this type of human resource is staying futile in administrative positions of higher education. The paper is based on a meta-analysis study of literature involving external and internal factors related to women's administrative promotion. According to literature review three major factors have emerged: cultural, organizational, and individual factors. By considering the factors, university developers and managers are able to make strategic decisions in order to enhance the participation of women for senior administrative positions.

Keywords: administrative status, women participation, higher educational

1. Introduction

Universally, education is accepted as the foundation for achieving the goal of social justice (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009). The justification for developing women's participation in top senior position of higher education assumed based on the quality, equity, and development (UNICEF, 2013). Although over the decades, the progress has made globally in improving the status of women in administrative positions of higher education (Group, World bank, 2012) and also women have received varied treatments in higher education system by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, but gender disparities still exist, especially in regard to participation in top decision-making positions female suffering from multi-faceted discriminations in occupying high ranking positions (Rezai-Rashti, 2011; Li, 2014). The fact that women are under-represented in senior administrative positions of higher education such as Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, President, Vice President, deans of faculties, directors of institutes and heads of departments is well recognized in the literature (Dominici et al., 2009; Lam, 2009; Wajcman, 2013; Lie & Malik, 2014). According to UNESCO (2012) in the field of higher education in the world, women need to be more involved in teaching and management than men. Women in higher education administrative position have failed to achieve equality with men. Therefore based on UNESCO report the ratio of men to women in middle administration and senior administration is 20 to 1 (UNESCO, 2012).

Higher education has made notable improvement over the last three decades (Group, World bank, 2012). Recent statistics show that in 30 western countries on average 21 percent of full professors are women, while 47% PhD graduated is female (Ledin et al., 2010). The issue can be generalized over many other countries as the same pattern can be observed at the top level executive position (UNESCO, 2012). However, higher education in administrative positions has faced with an absence of female managers (Lie & Malik, 2014). Although many women are educated, need disposition, and experiences to be successful and effective as academic executive and managerial roles, women often find that others challenge their authority and question their intelligence (Morley, 2013a). Consequently, due to the perception of society that management as being masculine-oriented, women continue to feel the demand to prove their authoritative power to fit in a role that society typically ascribes to men (Eagly et al., 2008). The problem is equal representation of women in administrative roles, and this condition is prevalent and persistent across occupations (Noble & Moore, 2006; Morley, 2013a). While very few women are influencing the legislative practice, the low participation of women in higher-ranking status affects

the progress in improving the legal and regulatory situation for promoting gender equal opportunity.

One way is by helping women to expand their own participation to top level executive positions. This paper critically reviews and analyzes the influencing factors which support and hinder participation of women academician in administrative positions at higher education institution.

2. Literature Review

The study on women in educational administration has become a significant field of research since 1980s. There is a large volume of literature that identifies the challenges and facilitators for women assuming executive and management positions, in society generally and in higher education institutions. Over time, scholars have addressed issues of external and internal influencing factors for women's development in higher education (Acker, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989; Walsh, 1996; Blackmore, 1999; Young, 2002; Luke et al., 2003; Oplatka, 2006; Dominici et al., 2009; Lam, 2009; Wajcman, 2013; Li, 2014; Lie & Malik, 2014).

Scholars have attempted to analyze the persistence of a gender discrepancy in higher education administration through varied lenses and approaches (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Some researchers have examined this issue by using structural perspectives (Johnsrud & Heck, 1998), socio-cultural perspectives (Noe, 1988; Lee, 2001; Ramanan et al., 2006), or even multiple perspectives (Luke, 1998b; Oakley, 2000; Oplatka, 2006; Lam, 2009; Nguyen, 2013).

Scholars such as Eagly (2007, 2011), Glazer-Raymo (2008), Madsen (2008) and other prominent writers such as Luke et al. (1997) and Oplatka (2006) who focus on women's experiences in higher education have presented more reasonable insights on the gender inequality in administrative positions. As a result, researchers both outside and inside higher education agree broadly that women who aspire to top management positions counter paths with full of 'twists and turns' (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Based on literature, scholars have used numerous terms to describe 'twists and turns' as the barriers related to women's development. Based on the reviews of literature two terms are prominent; 'Glass ceiling' and 'Labyrinth'. The most usually used term is the 'glass ceiling' (Glazer-Raymo, 2001). The glass ceiling seems to be a widespread phenomenon that explains why women, despite of their qualifications and abilities cannot progress to the top administrative positions of higher education administration worldwide (Luke, 1998a, 1998b; Umbach, 2006; Beck, 2008; Lam, 2009). Another key term, Eagly & Carli (2007) used the term 'labyrinth' to explain the circuitous paths that women have to navigate in order to achieve top positions in societies. They argued that many women are able to break the ceiling and make it to the top-level positions. Although the paths exist, but the barriers have become more invisible and more difficult to detect; thus, they named the path to achievement a labyrinth.

3. Method

Methodologically the study was conducted using qualitative approach. Reviewing literature papers in order to elicit the factors affecting women participation at top senior administrative positions. The reviewed papers are from 1995-2014.

4. Findings

This review paper focuses on challenges encountering the participation of women in senior administrative status at higher education within Western and Eastern countries. Based on documents analysis three major factors emerged: namely, cultural factors, organizational practice, and individual aspects. From the data analysis, the literature provides evidence on how cultural, organizational and individual factors challenge women in their career participation to senior administrative positions.

4.1 Cultural Factors

The review of literature on the impacts of cultural practices on development of women participation points to two important factors: cultural values and societal factors. These notions provide evidence on how cultural factors challenge women in their career participation.

4.1.1 Cultural Values

Result of studies being reviewed show that women, especially in traditional societies (e.g. Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia) are expected to follow particular cultural traditions imposed by their society (Luke, 1998b; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Oplatka, 2006). Doherty and Manfredi (2006) and Luke (2003) argues that women may have even internalized a sense of 'gender neutral meritocratic idealism', but with the demands of conformity with societal "norms", values and roles, women may feel that they need to adhere to the social expectations of their roles. As a result, women in yearly competitions for promotion or professorial conferment

are unwilling to come forward and display their achievements.

Another key point, the stereotype ideal of women's roles is as dutiful mother, wife, care taker and child bearer, and they are probable to take more household tasks than their men (Luke et al., 2003; Stivens, 2013). Such role expectations have been recognized to be main barriers in academic career development for female in Turkey (Neale & Özkanlı, 2010), Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia (Luke, 2003), Kenya (Orser, Riding, & Stanley, 2012), in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2013), and even for Asian American Pacific Islanders (Chen & Hune, 2011) and African American women (Blackwood & Brown-Welty, 2011).

For instance, Ballenger (2010) found that women leaders often confront cultural rules and patriarchal ideologies of feminine propriety that link women hood with marriage, unpaid work and the family, and justify women in lower managerial positions with partial chance and authority.

The literature also describes inappropriate of stereotypes in women participation in managing careers. Stereotypes 'think manager-think male' attitude is a deep-rooted view, particularly among males (Schein, 2001). Desai et al. (2014) found that gender stereotyping has a reflective impact on women's behavior and attitude. Women have long been the sufferers of the culturally and socially generated values that describe them as weak and dependent on men. As a result, many women do not aspire to management positions, because they believe themselves unable. Therefore, women are more unwilling to demonstrate their management skills in public or to socialize with colleagues to build professional networks. This behavior restricts professional opportunities and development for women academician in higher education institutions.

In contrast, Cubillo and Brown (2003) showed that women in European culture and society did not perceive cultural values as obstacles. Women who grew up in developing countries such as Middle East or Africa were more sympathetic of their culture that still considers women generally as homemakers and child bearers.

4.1.2 Societal Factors

Another cultural perception that influences women's participation in academics administrative position is societal factors. The 1994 World Yearbook of Education, titled, *The Gender Gap in Higher Education*, highlights societal factors that may influence the development of women in academia positions: the egalitarianism of the public culture and the relative successes of women in gaining access to high-ranks positions in higher education (Ozga et al., 2013). Thus, social equality may progress the potential of women's career participation. While these societal systems may increase the chance for female, restriction in women's freedom of action in comparison to men, restriction in establishing connection with others, social complications and difficulties may reduce the potential of women's career development (Shahtalebi & Yarmohammadian, 2012).

4.2 Organizational Factors

The literature provides evidence on how organizational structures shortcoming women in their participation in administrative status. The review of literature on the impacts of structural practices on development of women participation points to two important factors; mentoring and appointment practices.

4.2.1 Mentoring

Both formal and informal mentors serve as a helpful sources of information on the organizational culture, how things are managed and accomplished in particular institutions (Moore, 1988; Johnson, 1998; Wolverson & Gmelch, 2002; Hansman, 2002; Palgi & Moore, 2004; Brown, 2005; Harris, Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2010; Wright & Msengi, 2011; Airini et al., 2011; Nguyen, 2013). Furthermore, mentors serve as role models, because women who enter the academic and educational professions need support from other people to adjust to their profession and to understand the culture of the institutions (Beck, 2008).

The results of studies on mentoring in North American and New Zealand universities have found that mentoring plays a significant role in developing women university presidents up the administrative status (Olson & Jackson, 2009; Neale & Özkanlı, 2010). However, research focusing on Asian universities is less conclusive. Researchers have found that some women academics stress the importance of an informal mentor (Luke, 2002), while other findings have contradicted the view that mentoring is one of the mediating factors for women's career aspirations (Luke, 1998a; Lam, 2009). The review of literature on mentoring in the West and the East reveals differences in mentoring practices between Western and Eastern universities (Luke, 1998b, 2002). Literature on mentoring in Eastern universities reveals that it is mostly informal (Luke, 1998b, 2002; Özkanlı & White, 2008; Lam, 2009).

4.2.2 Promotion Practices

Major universities and institutions were historically the dominion based on a certain class of men, hence so universities practices and norms are constructed base of men's life experiences (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). These

practices are well established and very difficult to modify (Bailyn, 2003). Although women have entered employment and have added enormous contributions, the balance of power within organizations still is in favor of men. Consequently, female academics are often disadvantaged in pay and promotion (Airin, 2010). Poor policies on women return from leave and discrimination against women in selection and promotion through the syndrome of supporting 'people like us' (Nguyen, 2013).

Some scholars also use the term 'sticky floors' to explain how women tend to be fixed in low-skilled and low-paid positions (Iverson, 2011). In United Kingdom, women were less likely to get concerned in the informal networking required to get noticed, the initial informal search was considered lacking in transparency and possibly a form of indirect discrimination (Doherty & Manfredi, 2006). In Malaysia and Hong Kong, training specifically for women managers is often not a university priority. However, if a general management training program is provided, it does not fit well with women's schedules (Luke et al., 2003).

Bureaucracies serve to consciously hide the fact that solely masculine traits are needed to be successful in their organizations (Acker, 2011). The highly masculine's culture at universities can act as another barrier for women interested in leadership and management positions (White et al., 2011; Chen & Hune, 2011).

The purpose of gender equity programs and legislative actions such as Affirmative Action and Title IX in the United States and Bill for the development for Women Students is to ensure that men and women receive equal treatment in recruitment, hiring, appointment, and promotion in higher education. Nevertheless, these policies have not completely improved gender equity.

In short, policies and processes in higher education can act as barriers against women assuming management positions; however based on the analyzed documents, the organizational structure and culture of higher education institutions vary greatly between countries. These differences are clearly present in the way institutions establish policies and practices that address the gender discrepancy.

4.3 Individual Factors

The literature provides evidence on how individual factors disadvantage women in their career participation. The reviews of literature on the impacts of individual factors on development of women participation points to three prominent topics: such as personality traits, Leadership and Gender, and professional skills.

4.3.1 Personality Traits

Personality traits are a strong determinant of success for an academic administrator. One of the most consistent themes in studies on women's career development worldwide is that women's personal attributes can be a motivating or an impending factor to career development.

Women's internalization of barriers may also contribute to their underrepresentation in management. Some examples of these barriers are lack of competitiveness, limited access to professional training, lack of qualification, lack of confidence, and a fear of failure (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). For this reason, some women refuse to fight their way to the top because of their lack of self-confidence (Gray, 2011; Nguyen, 2013).

On the other hand, several personal attributes that are likely to help women in reaching top positions are networking skills, adaptability, resilience, sense of humor, determination, self-motivation, confidence, and independence and a high level of job commitment (Johnsrud & Heck, 1998; Madsen, 2008; Lam, 2009; Wajzman, 2013). These studies demonstrate that women with the above-listed personal attributes are likely to survive in the male-dominated world of higher education.

4.3.2 Leadership and Gender

Stereotypes associated with these perceived differences in men and female are an invisible ceiling for women ascension to upper leadership status in higher education administration (Coleman, 2005).

Moreover, Eagly and Carli (2007) wrote that studies on gender and leadership elucidate the concerns about relationships between leader characteristics and gendered stereotypes. Society commonly relates leader characteristics to stereotypical male traits such as ambition, confidence, dominance, and assertiveness. However, female stereotypical traits, such as kindness, helpfulness, warmth, and gentleness do not make women effective leaders (Tritt, 2009; Reishus, 2012; Glazer-Raymo, 2001; Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009; Zhuge et al., 2011).

4.3.3 Education and Training

A significant amount of literature on women's participation development in the West has discussed the impact of education and training on their career development (Aziz et al., 2013; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Henry et al., 2005). Some scholars have used theories from sociology such as human and cultural capital to examine the effect

of education on career aspiration, career trajectories, or career mobility (Bourdieu, 1986, 2008; Rosser, 2003; Umbach, 2006).

Women faculty members benefit from graduate education to achieve professorships. Ismail and Rasdi (2006) discovered that in countries where women with doctorate degrees are scarce, experiences in graduate schools, especially overseas, will benefit women by providing more access to local, national, and international networks. Literature on women's career development in Asia has discussed the role of a college education for women in building their career path. However, more studies need to focus on leadership training for women who already hold top administrative positions (Ross & Green, 2000; Bickel et al., 2002; Van der Boon, 2003).

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to examine challenges reported in the literature that administrative women in higher education encountered in their participation to the highest administrative status in higher education. Studies focusing on Western universities and non-western universities are uniform in their findings. In particular, studies on gender discrepancy in higher education have demonstrated that many countries have made only minor progress due to socio-cultural, organizational and individual barriers. At a global level, women are still underrepresented in many fields and especially in top administrative positions. The literature review on development of women participation in higher education identified three key factors that account for women's upward mobility in higher education: cultural factors, organizational practices, and personality. However cultural factors are more likely to become obstacles to women's participation in senior administrative positions than organizational practices and personality. It is because, based on the previous studies; cultural values affect women participation in the top administrative positions through many ways such as family, society norms, organizational culture and personal traits. These factors are interrelated however their influences on development of women participation vary depending on the characteristics of an individual country, such as the differences within social, cultural, and historical contexts within countries.

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