THE MISSING LINK: GENDER DIVERSITY AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

Wycliffe Mande
Human Resource, Research and Learning Practitioner, Kenya

ABSTRACT
Despite its importance and constitutional recognition, gender diversity is an ideal that is yet to be realized inhigher institutions of learning. Public universities in Kenya are guided by government legislations and policies and they should embrace gender diversity in their structures, recruitments and appointments of its human resources. However, according to the Kenya National Cohesion and Integration Commission, majority of the public universities in Kenya contravene the legal and policy stipulations in relation gender diversity. This paper examines the concept of gender diversity in public universities in Kenya. Using desk-top research approach, empirical and theoretical studies were analyzed and research findings and conclusions obtained. Based on the social categorization and the similarity-attraction theories,the study theoretically poses an argument that gender diversityis contravened in relation to academic staff composition in public universities in Kenya.The conclusion of the study is that sustainable development in the country and particularly in public universities, requires the concerted efforts of both men and women at all levels of decision making among the employees. The study then recommends that these institutions should strive to upscale representation of female employees and particularly at the apex of decision making not just as a fulfillment of affirmative policies but as positive gender diversity practice.

Keyword: Workforce Diversity, Gender Diversity, Public Universities, Human Resource Management.

1. INTRODUCTION
1.1 Workforce Diversity
Workforce diversity is a subjective phenomenon, created by group members themselves who on the basis of their different social identities categorize others as similar or dissimilar (O'Reilly, Williams and Barsade, 1998). Loden and Rosener (1991) define diversity as that which differentiates one group of people from another along primary and secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions of diversity, those exerting primary influences on our identities are; gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age and mental or physical abilities and characteristics. They claim that primary dimensions shape our basic self-image as well as our fundamental world views and have the most impact on groups in the workplace and society. Secondary dimensions of diversity on the other hand are less visible, exert a more variable influence on personal identity and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity. They include:

educational background, geographic location, religion, first language, family status, work style, work experience, military experience, organizational role and level, income and communication style. The secondary dimensions impact our self-esteem and self-definition (Loden and Rosener, 1991).

1.2 Gender Diversity

Powell, Butterfield and Parent (2002) defined gender as the physiological inference of a someone being either male or female, like expectations and beliefs regarding what kind of attitudes, behaviors, values, knowledge, skills, and interests areas are more suitable for or typical of one sex than the other. The study of gender diversity focuses on how individuals believe that males and females differ. These gender variations influence the manner in which individuals react to the behaviors of others in the work settings or any other group coalition. Gender diversities are visible in prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. In the last decades, those organizational barriers that hinder women from advancing to the top in their career have been a vital area in organizational research. Singh and Vinnicombe (2004) in their study discovered that women are almost if not completely absent when it comes to occupying senior positions in organizations.

However, male directors often form an elite group at the top of the corporate world and only very few women are able to breakthrough these glass ceiling into this elite group, despite making inroads into middle management. This point out that gender in the board of directors in some big organization is a barrier for career advancement. Singh and Vinnicombe (2004) argued that this is a matter of concern, because the talents of women are not being fully utilized. One of the most prevailing metaphors used to describe women's absence in senior organizational positions has been that of the 'glass ceiling'. Mavin (2016) citing Morrinson and Von Glinow (1990) said the phrase 'Glass ceiling' was made up in the 1960s. This is used to describe a subtle obstacle that is so clear but yet very powerful that it can hinder women from claiming up the managerial ladder. Glass ceiling was coined to describe those organizational practices and processes which creates difficulties and limitations in which women encounter when trying to attain the highest position of their particular field. Here, women may be unable to reach the top of the management hierarchy even though they can see it (Gatrell and Swan, 2008).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Globally various attempts have been undertaken to address the disparities between men and women. A number of agreements and conventions have been signed by member states to promote Gender Equality. The United Nations was the first through its charter to introduce codification of women's' rights in international law. Over the years, the United Nations' global conferences such as Mexico City 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985 and Beijing 1995 have strengthened the resolutions of these conferences and have in turn been adopted by various United Nations member states and are used in promoting Gender Issues (Womhnen: Global Gender Agenda: 1997:1-2).

In Africa, the African Union has passed eight policy commitments in its Gender Policy. All member states were signatory to the policy and were required to adhere to the stipulations of the policy. Some of the eight commitments of the African Union Gender Policy include: creating an enabling and stable environment- commitment to equal representation between men and women in decision making; legislation and legal protection actions against discrimination for ensuring gender equality by ensuring future treaties, declarations, protocols and decisions, were gender

responsive; and mobilizing stakeholders for implementing the African Union gender policy by implementing Advocacy and Awareness campaigns and fostering engagement and dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment among Africa's societies and citizens (African Union Gender Policy 2009:13-19). Therefore, the various attempts to empower women all over the world through efforts such as feminine movements, individual sacrifices, policies and awards in trying to make gender diversity feasible have been instrumental in creating an environment that is increasingly becoming friendly to woman empowerment.

In Kenya, the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2008-9:16, 38 and 214) indicated that there were disparities that existed in the Kenya Society regarding access to education, employment and power. The survey also indicated that the social and economic background of the woman had a bearing on her chances of experiencing physical violence. These disparities led the government to go for affirmative action to empower more women and bridge the gap between the genders. The country's vision 2030 was also committed to attaining the Millennium Development goals by the year 2015. This vision targeted, among other issues, reduction in poverty and universal education, besides prevention of discrimination. It would therefore, not be realistic for the country to struggle to attain the goals with one of the gender while leaving out the other as this would slow down attainment of the goals. The national machinery for coordinating gender mainstreaming in Kenya is the Division of Gender within the Ministry Of Gender, Children and Social Development. The Ministry, through the National Policy on Gender and Development 2000 provides the framework for the state to address gender imbalances and inequality. The government also established a National Commission for Gender and Development in the year 2004 to oversee the implementation of gender diversity activities in the country.

Despite government legislations and policies that have been put in place to ensure workforce diversity in public establishments, questions have been raised regarding workforce diversity in public universities in Kenya. In a report released by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (2016), it indicated that most of the public universities in Kenya still have major issues relating to gender inclusion. There is therefore need for these institutions to rapidly adopt workforce diversity management practices to achieve this objective.Several studies have been conducted on the benefits of gender diversity to organizations. In a research on Workforce Diversity Management and Employee Performance in the Banking Sector in Kenya by Munjuri and Maina (2013), it was found out that diversity management seems more sensitive in the Bank and served a pivotal role. It encourages better employee retention, increased productivity, better morale, an expanded market share and improved customer service. Jerono (2014) on Women Participation in University leadership, showed that women involvement in leadership was below one-third of the constitutional requirement and was only concentrated in the lower hierarchy of university leadership. These creates the gap of more studies to be undertaken in relation to gender diversity especially in institutions of higher learning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework
2.1.1 Social Categorization Theory

According to social categorization perspective, it is assumed that variations in demographic characteristics of team members influence group processes and in turn the group performance (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). Due to similarities and differences between team members, team members are inclined to categorize themselves and others into groups (van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). Gender diversity brings a distinction between members with the same gender background - who become members of the in group - and members with different gender backgrounds - who become members of the out-group. These sub categorization within a team in an in-group and out-group disrupts the group functioning within a team. Unequal relations exist between the two groups, with people favoring and trusting in-group members more than out-group members. Social categorization thus hinders group processes, that hinder the group functioning and collaboration within the group and in turn the performance of the group (van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007).

A gender homogeneous workgroup lacks the basis for categorization into psychological gender groups. However, as gender diversity reaches a low level resulting in a skewed group (for example, seven men and one woman in a group of eight employees), the token woman will feel isolation and assimilation pressures (Kanter, 1977a, 1977b). With an increased representation of women, gender diversity reaches a moderate level resulting in a tilted group (for example, six men and two women in that group of eight employees). The members of such a group may begin to categorize themselves into the psychological groups of male group-members and female group-members (Randel,2002). This categorization into psychological groups leads to in-group out-group dynamics that, in turn, may produce undesirable group behavior, such as decreased communication and increased conflict (Pelled, 1996). With even higher levels of gender diversity, the workgroup would divide into male and female psychological groups of similar size (a balanced workgroup). This increases opportunities for males and females to interact with one another. The increased contact may weaken social identities and discourage the undesirable in-group out-group dynamics. Therefore, gender balanced groups experience more job satisfaction than gender tilted groups (Fields and Blum, 1997).

2.1.2 Similarity- Attraction Theory

Similarity-attraction perspective is consistent with the social categorization theory, and it postulates that people tend to be more attracted to and favor people who seem similar as themselves- same gender (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). However, different from the social categorization perspective, according to the similarity-attraction perspective, team members determine their similarity with other team members more by means of deep-level, underlying characteristics, like attitudes and values (Harrison and Klein, 2007). Especially values are likely to change with the gender of the team member. When team members have similar gender, they share common life experiences and values, which might make interaction with each other easier and more desirable (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). As a result, team members prefer to work with similar others (van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). In contrast, when team members have dissimilar gender, this could lead to problematic group processes such as less positive attitudes, less frequent communication, a higher likelihood of turnover from the group and in turn a decrease in team performance (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998).

2.2 Empirical Review

Abdel (2012) study explores the impact of gender, age, and education background on employee performance in the Egyptian Pharmaceutical industry which is renowned to employ highly diversified workforce. The study sample was 300 middle level management positions. Data was collected via self-administered questionnaires methodology. The results indicated that only two variables, gender and education background, were significant in explaining the variance in employee performance when different work force work together, while age diversity does not.

Ngao and Mwangi (2013) research to explore the effects of managing gender diversity to enhance organizational performance, used descriptive research design and data was collected from sixty employees of the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) which is a profit making public institution in Kenya. Theoretical model and hypothesis in this study were tested using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicated that gender, age and marital status greatly impact on organization performance and success. In addition the study recommended that KPA should recruit a more diverse workforce as it will result to improved synergy in decision making, better understanding of customer's needs and increased flexibility in staffing. The study then concludes that this should however be reinforced through well formulated human resource policies and practices.

Nakagawa (2015) research presents empirical evidence testing whether increasing gender diversity is associated with improved firm performance for Japanese listed companies, which have different cultural backgrounds from Western companies, after controlling for size and firm age. The study underscores that the growing importance of the Japanese female workforce under global competition requires a better understanding of gender-related issues in organizational management which is undergoing a transformation from their rooted traditional managerial habits, such as seniority-based promotion, lifetime employment, paternalism, or prioritizing corporate harmony, which favor men. The study found statistically significant positive relationships between managerial gender diversity and one measure of firm performance. In addition, the study found out that manufacturing firms benefit significantly and sensitively to a greater extent from increasing managerial gender diversity as compared to those in the service industries, and moreover the curvature of this relationship is significantly greater for manufacturers. Furthermore, firms that demand fewer hours of overtime by their employees also experience this performance boost with increases in management gender diversity, with the same concave shape and the more over time is reduced the more pronounced is the effect.

Curth and Wiemann (2016) study on the impact of gender diversity on the research quality of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom argues that despite previous studies indicating substantially lower publishing productivity among female researchers, their study postulates the existence of a positive impact of gender diversity on institutional research quality due to possible synergy effects. Multiple panel regressions was performed and found out that when not controlling for other factors, gender diversity seems to have a negative impact on research quality. When relevant control variables – namely an institution's size, its research emphasis, faculty age, and faculty maturity – are introduced, this effect disappears. Further, no difference in the effect of gender diversity was found across scientific disciplines.

Bae and Skaggs (2017) study analyzes the effects of gender diversity in management on organizational performance using Korea Workplace Panel Survey data for 2005, 2007, and 2009. Few studies have examined this relationship for firms outside the United States, particularly in Asian countries. Similar to previous research, the findings show that gender diversity in management has a U-shaped relationship with firm productivity. Second, the curvilinear relationship between gender diversity in management and firm productivity is stronger in service-oriented industries relative to manufacturing industries, with the highest level of employee productivity within homogeneous management groups. Third, the study includes a measure of workplace family-friendly policies to moderate the relationship between gender diversity in management and organizational performance. The study found that the U-shaped pattern also holds in firms with a large number of family-friendly policies. This suggests that gender diversity in management has considerable influence on the productivity of Korean firms through interactions with family-friendly policies.

3.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article used a desktop review of qualitative information from a variety of documents. This made it possible to get insight on various scholarly works by different authors on ethnic diversity at the workplace. The main aim of doing a desk review is to gain knowledge on the area of study by looking at the different approaches by different scholars, hence make an independent argument and conclusion. The review also allows the researcher to go through institutional reports and be able to make a valid description of the subject being investigated. For this article, the study assessed scholarly works relevant to gender diversity as well as organizational reports and websites.

4. RESULTS

Gender Diversity of Academic Staff in Public Universities.

Table 1. Gender Diversity of Academic Staff in Public Universities

S/No.	Public Universities	Academic Staff M	F	Total	%M	%F
1.	University of Nairobi	1,265	482	1,747	72%	28%
2.	Moi University	620	278	898	69%	31%
3.	Kenyatta University	638	351	989	65%	35%
4.	Egerton University	427	163	590	72%	28%
5.	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture	542	197	739	73%	27%
6.	Maseno University	296	113	409	72%	28%
7.	Masinde Muliro University	239	93	332	72%	28%
8.	Dedan Kimathi University of Technology	111	26	137	81%	19%
9.	Chuka University	117	54	171	68%	32%

10. Technical University of Kenya	270	177	447	60%	40%
11. Technical University of Mombasa	185	51	236	78%	22%
12. Pwani University	130	42	172	76%	24%
13. Kisii University	157	70	227	69%	31%
14. University of Eldoret	182	89	271	67%	33%
15. Maasai Mara University	97	44	141	69%	31%
16. JOOUST	88	29	117	75%	25%
17. Multimedia University of Kenya	51	28	79	65%	35%
18. Laikipia University	69	31	100	69%	31%
19. South Eastern Kenya University	95	49	144	66%	34%
20. Meru University	76	26	102	75%	25%
21. University of Kabianga	93	37	130	72%	28%
22. Karatina University	71	73	144	49%	51%
Total	**5,819**	**2,503**	**8,322**	**70%**	**30%**

Source: NCIC (2016).

Table 1 shows results of gender diversity among academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The findings reveal that majority of the public universities in Kenya have not adhered to the two-thirds gender rule. Dedan Kimathi University of Technology has the highest percentage of male academic staff at 81% while only 19% of the academic staff are of female gender. In Technical University of Mombasa, out of a total of 236 academic staff, 78% of them are of male gender while only 22% are of female gender. This is the second highest ranked male dominated academic staff public university in Kenya. The third highest ranked is Pwani University with a total of 76% of the academic staff being male while only 24% of the academic staff being female. The results also reveal that the second and the third ranked male dominated academic staff public university are located at coastal part of the country. University of Nairobi, the oldest and the highest ranked university in Kenya has 72% of its academic staff as male and only 28% of the staff areof female gender. The university also has the highest total number of academic staff compared to other public universities.

Moreover, out of the 22 public universities 11 of them (50%) of the total have more than 70% of their academic staff being male. Further, the results indicate that 95% of all the 22 public universities have more than 50% of their staff being male with only one University(Karatina University) recording 49% of their academic staff as male and 51% of the academic staff as female. Based on the government legal and policy framework on gender composition of the staff, only five out of the 22 public universities (23%) have adhered to the policy with 77% of the public universities contravening. The universities which have adhered to the gender policy and have more than 30% of their staff as female are: Kenyatta University (35%), Multimedia University of Kenya (35%), Technical University of Kenya (40%), South Eastern Kenya University (34%) and Karatina University (51%).Overall, the results therefore established that gender diversity is contravened among academic staff in most public universities in Kenya.

4. DISCUSSION

Public universities in Kenya have a long way to bring gender diversity among its academic staff. Human resource strategies in relation to staff recruitment need to be put in place in order for these universities to adhere to the government legal and policy frameworks. A diverse workforce is a reflection of a changing world and workplace, gender diverse work teams therefore bring high value to organizations and respecting individual difference in relation to gender that will benefit the workplace by creating a competitive edge and increase work productivity. Management tools in a gender diverse workforce should be used to educate everyone about gender diversity and its issues, including legal, policy and institutional frameworks. Most workplaces are made up of diverse cultures, so organizations need to learn how to adapt perceptions of specific gender diversity issues to be successful. The extent to which managers recognize gender diversity and its potential effects defines an organization's approach to managing gender diversity. It is imperative for management in public universities in Kenya to understand that gender diversity if properly enhanced will help create a work environment in which male and female employees and stakeholders feel integrated. The demographics at work places in Kenya and the world at large are rapidly changing andgender diversity is therefore vital for organizations that desire to thrive in the future.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATION

The conclusion of the study is that gender diversity is contravened in public universities in Kenya. Gender imbalance in this institutions contravenes the legal policy of these organizations.For sustainable development in the country and particularly in public universities, concerted efforts of both men and women at all levels of decision making among the employees is vital. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and The National Commission for Gender and Development (NCGD) have policies that relates to gender imbalances and inequalities. However, majority of public universities in Kenya have more than a two thirds of the total academic staff from one gender. Therefore, a lot need to be done in relation to policy implementation in order to achieve gender diversity in Kenyan public universities. The study then recommends that these institutions should strive to upscale representation of female employees and particularly at the apex of decision making not just as a fulfillment of affirmative policies but as positive gender diversity practice.

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