

## **Women in the Education sector: Monitoring and Evaluation of Women Empowerment and Educational Leadership**

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*Abstract:* The extent of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) realization provides lessons for the future policies and programs relating to women empowerment in the education sector. First, we express a critical view that the link between universal primary education (MDG2) and gender equality and women empowerment (MDG 3) was largely ignored in the monitoring and evaluating the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. We therefore argue that there is a necessity for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to go beyond the simple measures of women empowerment in the education sector was used in quantifying MDGs' achievement to more comprehensive measurements. In the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of the perspectives of delving women in academia is using SDG number 4, 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,' to measure the SDG number 5, 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' - and the vice versa. We discuss more comprehensive perspectives of measuring women's empowerment in the education sector. We focus on three school management variables as measures of women empowerment: 1) the nature of both internal and external audits to ensure accountability and transparency; 2) professionalism enhancement (nature of the In-service education training); and 3) the analysis of resource needs in empowering women. The study concludes that some challenges of women empowerment and leadership emerge from the education sector governance while others originate from the broader societal structures. There is a need for more integrated analysis in monitoring and evaluating SDGs achievement. Consistently accurate and relevant data is requisite and essential to monitoring and evaluating the real effects of education policies on women empowerment to enable a thorough analysis.

**Key Words:** Women empowerment, leadership, education sector, Sustainable Development Goals, monitoring and evaluation

### **1 Introduction**

There exist significant gender-based stereotypes of who ascends to leadership, especially in the

Developing World. The education sector is one of the areas. Researchers and policymakers have a role in developing analytical strategies to measure equality and the quality of women's performance in educational leadership, which in most

developing countries is dominated by men. In essence, it is through developing the appropriate monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks, gathering appropriate data, conducting comprehensive data analysis that policymakers are able to measure the extent of women empowerment in academia. There has been increased global advocacy for women empowerment that appears to be parallel and complementary to the MDGs, i.e., the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality 2005–2015 and CEDAW Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995–2015. Still, there lacks a framework to measure the combined total impact of these programs.

Data from UNESCO indicate that sub-Saharan Africa has the least number of female teachers in every education level. The lower levels of education have a higher fraction of female teachers as compared to the higher education levels. On average, the percentage of female teachers in primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa is around 44%, while those in secondary education are approximately 30%. The figures are even much lower in tertiary education. Concerning leadership in the sector, the number of women is further disproportionately smaller [1]. Thus, gender equality in educational leadership does not mean 50-50% between men and women but rather a proportionate representational leadership.

Different arguments have been put forth about gender and leadership. The conventional notion is that men are better than women in leadership. The 'female advantage in the leadership' argument is also in the debate. The latter argument is founded on the belief that there is a greater possibility that women adopt empowering leadership styles while men are more disadvantaged because their style of leadership is dominated by commanding-and-controlling the behavior of subordinates as well as the assertion of power. Contrary to these arguments, a meta-analysis conducted by Samantha et al. [2] after considering all the leadership contexts, found out that the

effectiveness of men's and women's leadership styles does not differ. See also, [3]. Given the same opportunities for professional development, both men's and women's leadership output has no significant difference. Some relevant studies can be found in [4] and [5].

One challenge with the scholarship of global development goals is that there exist vast literature on women in education sector leadership in developed and developing countries [6, 7, 8]. There are also many studies on women's empowerment and MDGs and SDGs [9, 10, 11]. However, there is a general absence of a combination of the two perspectives of women empowerment. In this paper, we aim at filling this gap by exploring the analytics of measuring women's empowerment in the education sector within the SDGs framework.

### **1.1 Transiting from the MDGs 2 and 3 to SDGs 4 and 5**

The MDG 2 was concerned with the most fundamental education level, i.e., achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE). One principle and an obvious measure of achievement of this goal was children's enrollment rate in primary schools. Countries localized and operationalized this goal in different ways. The most common policies introduced by African governments included: reducing the cost of primary education or free and compulsory primary education; free provision of teaching and learning materials; expansion of schools; employment of more teachers; promotion of non-formal (adult) education as well as special education to children with special needs. Some countries like Lesotho introduced school feeding programs [1]. In Kenya, free primary education saw the primary school enrollment increase from 5.93 million in 2003 to 10.2 million children in 2013. This was translated into a gross enrollment rate of 117% [12, 13, 14].

The MDG 3 focused on women empowerment - '*promote gender equality and empower women.*' In principle, gender equality refers to not only

equal representation but also the active participation of both men and women in the decision-making process. The analysis of women in leadership in the education sector draws focus to both gender equality in the sector and the creation of an attractive or unattractive picture to girls whose dream is to occupy those positions in the future. Regarding gender equality, we refer to the formal processes and procedures that determine the women's acquisition of leadership within the education sector as 'women empowerment-oriented policies.'

Various agencies have been active in promoting women's leadership in the education sector. For example, UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) encourages education policymakers to engage in broad-based participatory processes. UNESCO-IIEP has contributed to raising awareness by providing training targeted at women as part of professional development to enhance their participation in the formulation of policies, plans, programs and projects related to the SDG 4 [14]. In 2017, IIEP hosted a Summer School for female planners. Its theme was, "Policy, Planning and Leadership for Sustainable Educational Development" to empower them to identify information needs better and make policy recommendations concerning women and leadership [15]. Among other achievements, the training drew women participants from various countries to enhance competencies, which are essential requirements for leadership positions while promoting intercultural dialogue.

## **2 Problem formulation: A shallow analysis of women in education**

In the millennium development agenda, researchers and policymakers measured the achievement of different goals separately. Many reports and scholarly work indicate minimal integrated statistics between MDG 2 and MDG 3 achievement [1,12]. The only apparent point of intersection between the analysis of the two goals

was comparing the enrollment rates between girls and boys. This was despite the clarity of target 3a of MDG goal 3 - '*Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015*'. A narrow understanding of the concept 'gender disparity' might have shifted the analysis to the pupils and students and failed to include the educators, see [16].

Gender is a mainstream issue that typically ought to be integrated into all socio-economic and political arena. Unlike health or education, which are stand-alone sectors and can be measured distinctively, women empowerment is measured by aggregating all relevant data from all sectors. It even becomes more complicated due to different measures of empowerment. The monitoring and reporting of MDG 3 achievement experienced the same challenge. It required a multi-agency task force from all sectors and departments.

Contrary to the conventional MDGs monitoring and reporting, we were motivated by the need to shift the analysis of the same agendas under the SDG framework. In this case, we proposed an analytical approach that combines the monitoring, evaluation, and learning of SDG 3 and SDG 4 achievement to generate a comprehensive and integrated causal-effect analysis on each other. Through the integration of SDGs analysis, the meaning of sustainability as 'the ability to sustain' is achieved to its fullest. Moreover, a close reference to UNDP reports on the MDGs' attainment indicated an analytical gap by overemphasizing quantity (numbers) and missing out or inadequately addressing the quality issues.

Nevertheless, as the MDGs focused on eradicating extreme poverty, SDGs emphasized more on long-term, inclusive, and sustainable development. While still acknowledging the importance of quantitative data, unlike the evaluation of MDGs 2 and 3, in the following section, we shall discuss the need to raise the level of analysis of SDGs 4 and 5 and strategies to

measure the impact of education policies on women empowerment.

### 3 Discussion: expanding the analysis of SDGs

SDG 4 states, '*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*' Although there are some efforts towards narrowing the gender gap in education [17, 18], gender inequality still remains a big challenge, especially in the most vulnerable regions in Africa. The SDG 4 aims to promote quality learning and enhance relevant education to holistic development [19]. Attaining education is connected to most SDGs, and gender equality is inextricably connected to equal access to education [20, 21].

Gender-based inclusiveness and equitability are key perspectives to ensuring the quality of education. Similarly, the increasing women's representation in the parliament needs to be translated into increased interest and effort to establish inclusive policies that promote women in leadership. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, inclusive refers to '*including all the services or items normally expected or required.*' On the other hand, equitable refers to '*fair and impartial*'. A broader conceptualization of the term 'inclusive and equitable' in the SDGs framework focuses not only on the recipient of education (either boys or girls) but also on the educators and administrators in the sector.

A key concern with the SDG 5 is how to measure the impact of policies that promote the quality of education on women empowerment. For this study, we are concerned with managerial policies, where the analysis adopts three major administrative tasks within the education sector. Although there could be other parameters that reflect the rate of women empowerment (inclusivity and equality) in the education sector, our analysis is limited to: 1) the nature of audits as a measure of accountability and transparency of who gets into leadership, 2) Professionalism

enhancement – the nature of in-service education training 3) and the analysis of the resource needs of women empowerment programs in the sector. We thus conducted a literature review and discussed the three agendas from both the policymakers' perspective and practitioners' perspective.

#### 3.1 Accountability: the audit of the job promotion procedures and processes

Accountability is not arbitrary. It should be evaluated against a particular goal [22, 23, 24]. There is a wide range of challenges that hinder accurate accountability measures in education systems, such as lack of or inadequate records, the inefficiency of the systems deployed, and poor governance of the sector, among others. In most education systems, decision-makers tend to emphasize performance-based accountability, i.e., the children's performance in exams. Nevertheless, a strategy can yield both positive and negative effects depending on the context. A study in Wales indicated that accountability reforms might lead to increased general accountability but cause reduced trust and a negative impact on academic excellence [25]. In the contemporary world, teachers live under a huge pressure to account for their students' performance. In general, their teaching capabilities are evaluated based on student performance in a standardized exam. The education systems link poor teacher's performance to personal limitations such as absenteeism, poorly managed lessons, lack or substandard schemes of work and lesson plans, lack of proper understanding of the subject, poor teaching methods, lack of exam report forms/books to track the child's performance, etc. Therefore there is a possibility that quantitative indicators such as formative assessment and evaluations fail to capture the varied impact of education policies on an individual, and societal empowerment in the long run.

A study by McCaffery et al. indicated a positive impact of digitalization on tracking the child's performance. For instance, the Value-Added Modeling (VAM) is an essential statistical tool that offers an approach to monitor students' test scores over time and model teacher's effectiveness and therefore analyze the accountability [26]. Although VAM provides a good link between teachers and students, it does not factor in teachers' demotivation (especially among females who are negatively affected by patriarchal systems), which would originate from unfair and vague processes of rising to leadership.

When analyzing women's empowerment in the education sector, problems and their solutions will differ widely by context. According to the Global Education Report, the accountability tools used might work in some contexts, while in other cases, they fail to deliver any positive impact in improving the behavior of actors towards achieving SDG 4 [27]. Institutions such as Ministries, Commissions, and Unions in the education sector can promote transparency and accountability by holding each other to account for non-compliance with the existing laws and regulations (internal auditing). Internal auditing is preferable in assessing teacher's classroom work due to trust-related reasons as opposed to audits by external institutions.

The auditing should nevertheless not be narrowed down to the financial matters or human resources to capture the possible ghost workers. It should adequately evaluate gender-based stereotypes that significantly hinder the growth of women into leadership positions. Trust in the auditing systems as themselves being transparent is paramount. Factors such as teachers' professional status, promotion of collaboration with other professional teaching communities contribute to harmonizing the expectations of different actors in the education system. These harmonized expectations help shape and build clarity and transparency on job promotion policies and audit outcomes. The lucidity of

responsibilities at the individual level yields a positive feeling of fair and unbiased treatment [28]. Furthermore, effective communication enhances accountability and transparency by ensuring equal access to information on professionalism enhancement opportunities to all relevant individuals. The auditing system should be subjected to the educators' professional advancement as a principal determinant of who gets into leadership.

### **3.2 Professionalism enhancement (In-service education and training)**

If society's patriarchal nature gives men an upper hand in rising to the leadership, so which women empowerment policies should be put into place to curb this? Rising through the career ladder to leadership is a process that is primarily determined by professionalism. Morris refers to professionalism as efficiently offering a specialist service based on a body of knowledge [29]. Building professionalism is a preparation for leadership. The determination of who ascends to the leadership position itself is an end of a process of continuous professional development. Up to date, most leadership positions, especially in Africa, are dominated by men. It is necessary to deepen the analysis of how men meritocratically rise to the leadership effectively compared to women. Suppose men rise to the leadership by merit, in that case, policymakers in the education sector need to establish the aforementioned 'women empowerment-oriented education policies' and integrate them into professional development programs for women to equally be competitive.

The skill-needs analysis is the beginning point of the in-service professionalism enhancement. In this rapidly changing world, it is vital to map the incompetencies that hinder women from ascending to leadership and the systemic challenges of professional development. These systemic and multilayered bottlenecks in the education system,

such as the lack of proper policies on women empowerment and their comprehensive monitoring frameworks, are the critical causes of non-inclusiveness or gender inequality of women in leadership. Corruption has been cited as one of the limitations of women in leadership [30, 31]. Transparency in who gets an opportunity for professional enhancement is necessary.

Some of these systemic hindrances underpin the nature of personal development systems such as pre-service and in-service education and training; the ability to detect and enhance the performance of struggling teachers [32]. A study by OECD indicated that female teachers, especially in public schools, were more likely to report unsatisfied demands on in-service professional enhancement. In the same study, 42 percent of the respondents indicated a lack of suitable professional development programs as the reason not to enhance their professionalism [33]. Although the other highly quoted reason for not engaging in professional development was the conflict with the classwork schedule and family roles, it is crystal clear that unsuitable professional enhancement programs have a greater negative impact on female teachers as compared to their male counterparts. Depending on the nature of the in-service professional enhancement adopted and the redirection of the existing resource deficit, injection of new resources drawn from either the government or other sources is essential to promote and sustain these women-empowerment education policies [34].

### 3.3 Resource-needs analysis

A comprehensive needs-analysis of in-service professional development is a vital process of bridging the identified accountability gaps in building a gender-balanced leadership in the education sector. In most remedial interventions, particularly in the developing world, funds are usually the major challenge. However, to execute these non-negotiable improvements, a major

concern is how to redirect the existing financial and, more importantly, human resources to achieve these policies.

Gender mainstreaming factors such as gender sensitivity in the overall education management, leadership capacities at the school level, and building networks of professional teaching communities are essentials that help determine the resources needed to empower women into leadership. Collaboration and trust are usually reciprocal processes [28]. Although the collaborations of teaching professional communities play an important role in sharing experiences and building trust and transparency within the education system [35], they mostly occur on the same level (horizontally) and fail to share experiences across different cadres of education (vertically), or even across the countries. Yet, the strategies to women empowerment have a relatively diverse effect on all these levels. Already these collaboration networks exist both formally or informally and publicly or privately in different education systems. The major task is then re-aligning them with the broader vision and monitoring them as resources of women empowerment in the education sector.

Although most education systems have the right resources, one of the limitations in most countries would obviously be the ineffectiveness of their implementation to create a feedback-rich culture regarding women empowerment. In efforts to create norms of hard-edge feedback, a top-down approach to change often proves to be problematic where there is no political goodwill. The alternative approach - the bottom-up approach to reforms - is usually incoherent due to the lack of formal structures. A well-structured across-level networking can thus be crucial in transferring positive experiences from the pockets of success into the entire system change. These collaborations can aid in implementing change in the education system when controlled under well-framed monitoring and evaluation framework. Collaboration can also occur between different

government bodies. As such, there is a need to transform women's political representation into a critical mass that shapes resource allocation into areas that address the challenges of women rising to leadership.

### **3.4 Operationalization of monitoring, evaluation and learning variables**

Auditing aids in evaluating accountability and transparency. Some of the variables commonly used to measure accountability and transparency include; first, measuring the fraction of women who join the top leadership in the education sector through appointments. This would necessitate scrutiny of the public service department to examine gender imbalanced state appointments in the education sector. Secondly, measuring the openness and formality of communication on professionalism enhancement opportunities to all targeted staff. For instance, communication through an internal memo about a career opportunity might not reach a woman who has been on maternity leave for several months.

The measure of in-service professional enhancement is determined by a specific purpose of an intervention program. For instance, a multidimensional collaboration among the teaching professionals gives two-way feedback necessary to develop the SWOT analysis for policies that empower women in academia. Among the relevant measurement variables of women's empowerment policies include the leadership skills that a program targets to enhance; the number of women involved; the number of women who participated and eventually rose to leadership. Besides, as mentioned above, the unsuitability of the professional enhancing program is one of the primary reasons that hinder female educators' professional development. There is the need to measure the extent of centralization, decentralization as well as the online provision of professional programs to promote suitability among female educators in different localities.

Open education and other open professional programs increase flexibility for women's participation while still doing their family roles [36].

The resource-needs analysis is a variable derived from auditing outcomes. This includes the accountability and transparency gaps identified and the empowerment programs proposed as a remedial action. Overall, the measure of the digitalization of job promotion processes is vital. More computerized systems and processes enable faster and ad hoc data analysis. It also enables time series analysis of women's empowerment in the education sector. In every resource needs-scrutiny, cost-benefit analysis of an intervention program is necessary.

Different bodies within the education system, including the ministries, teachers' commissions, and unions, need to establish a multi-task force to review the accountability and transparency of the whole process that hinders women from climbing to leadership relatively to men. One of the key sub-process is the in-service professional enhancement lack of which limits educators' rising to higher career levers [37]. By conducting gender disparity auditing in the entire education sector, the Community of Practice is able to locate and quantify root causes of gender imbalance in education leadership within the SDGs Framework.

The integrated monitoring and evaluation of SDGs 4 and 5, however, experience potential challenges. First, the main responsibility of reporting the progress of SDGs achievement is at the national level. The generation of data through monitoring and evaluation enables fast-tracking of the effects of women empowerment policies in the education system. In most developing countries, there is a lack of adequate and accurate data to measure holistic progress in women empowerment in the education sector. It is crucial to harmonize the integrated statistics in the analysis of SDGs 4 and 5 to examine the holistic development context which hinders or enhances women's leadership in the education sector. Such harmonization enables a comparison of the SDGs achievement at national

and international levels. Since countries have different education governance systems, domestication of monitoring and reporting is vital [20]. The Global Partnership for Education's Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) is one of the global and regional programs that promote knowledge exchange, evidence and innovation in managing critical educational challenges in developing countries [38].

## Conclusion

This paper has examined the empowerment of women and the resultant inclusion into the education sector leadership. An interdisciplinary and complex analysis of double-edged benefits between women empowerment and quality education ought to be implemented within the SDG framework. On the one hand, education policies promote women's empowerment and inclusive leadership. On the other hand, gender-balanced leadership has a positive impact on the overall quality of education. A high number of women in leadership is itself a lesson to girls to raise their ambitions.

There is no societal issue whose sustainability can be analyzed comprehensively without engaging other related social fields. And so are the 17 SDGs. This also applies to women's empowerment and educational leadership. There is a need to develop an analytical strategy that captures the sustainability of women empowerment and how that empowerment enables them to rise to leadership. Further, there is a need to rethink qualitative approaches of monitoring and evaluating SDGs to a broader and deeper extent than those used in MDGs.

To achieve a re-energized women empowerment in the education sector, there is the need to re-examine practices and structures that hinder gender equality. First, the absence of systematic and reliable data collection systems on SDGs achievement is a challenge to monitoring progress on women empowerment. Secondly, the lack of integrated analysis on SDG 4 and 5 limits a comprehensive and evidence-based transformation

in the education sector. Less education creates a bigger space for retrogressive cultural practices that deter women from leadership positions. It is, however, essential to understand that not all challenges emanate from education sector governance. Others emerge from the general society. For instance, when a master's degree is required for a job promotion, there is a higher likelihood that men will qualify their fellow women. This is because mothers tend to focus more on family roles hence having minimal time to advance their professionalism. Eventually, irrespective of fair processes to rise to leadership, especially in the developing world, gender roles remain an impediment.

A way to overcome limitations of women and leadership in the education sector, the professional development programs need to be linked to the broad conceptualization of equity and inclusivity in SDG 4, and further monitored and evaluated against the achievement of SDG 5 '*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*'. The collaboration of teaching professional communities is one of the strategies that bring out the real manifestation of challenges that hinder women from rising to leadership. The findings of such networks and other related research studies form the grounds for more intervention strategies to increase women in educational leadership. There is a need to re-align the international development agenda related to gender equality and women empowerment with the context reality at the regional and local levels. By so doing, development actors are able to measure the qualitative aspects of the achievement of SDGs in a multi-dimensional manner. It will also become possible to understand how women empowerment programs translate to women rising to leadership in academia.

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### **Contribution of individual authors to the creation of a scientific article**

Samuel Mwangi initiated the research agenda, designed the study, contributed to the development of the study

Annie Karobia contributed to the development of the study by providing a practitioner's perspective. She also did the proofreading.

Jacqueline Njeru contributed to the development of the study by providing a policymaker's perspective. She also did the proofreading.

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