

An Analysis of Gender Equalities on Leadership in Local Government: The Case of the Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

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Abstract: This paper explores the issue of gender mainstreaming in government, with a particular reference to leadership positions in the South African Local Government sphere. It asserts that since democracy, South Africa has committed to the promotion of gender equality through legislation and policy initiatives. The paper is biased to leadership of the Local Government sphere, namely; the Offices of the Executive Mayors, Speakers and Municipal Managers in the Mpumalanga Province, South Africa for the period 2014 to date. Existing research argues that women under representation remains a persistent feature of politics internationally. However, gender equality is enshrined as a fundamental human right in Article 1 of the United Nations (UN) Charter stating that one of the purposes of the UN lies in the "... promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion". Thus, in view of the fact that the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5) – aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – this paper reflects on the practical realities and used the above-mentioned leadership portfolios in municipalities as a case study. The research design used on this paper was in accordance with the qualitative approach. It uses a narrative-analytical approach with a focus on descriptive analysis of variables and their impact on the effective implementation of gender equality. This approach is relevant in predicting a future framework for the future. However, the International Parliamentary Union has ranked South Africa as a 4th national parliament worldwide with 44.5 % of women parliamentarians. The outcomes point to the fact that women in these municipalities remain under-represented on strategic portfolios. Notwithstanding that South Africa has made general advances achieved in the public sector in this regard. Based on the outcomes above, it is evident that a particular attention still needs to be given to local government by the South African Government since it is a sphere that is closest to the people.

Keywords: Gender equalities, leadership, local government

1. Introduction

The advent of democracy in 1994 brought about a new era of leadership and certain basic values and principles at all spheres of government. However, after twenty years of democracy, South Africa is still faced with the daunting task of fully affording equal opportunities to women as compared to men in leadership positions in government institutions. This article explores the issue of gender mainstreaming in the South African Local Government with particular reference to the Office of the Executive Mayors, Speakers and Municipal Managers in the Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. In view of the fact that South Africa is still a young democracy, issues of women's empowerment and gender equality serves as a guide to an analysis of transformative leadership. This article intends to identify issues that confront women hoping to occupy leadership positions in government institutions. The first part of this article examines the legislative framework

and progress that has been made in the appointment of women to leadership positions in the public service. Statistics are used to qualify the progress that has been made. The statistics were further used to answer the research question of this article, thus, "To what extent do women experience equal opportunities in the South African public service". The second part of the article analyses issues of barriers in the advancement of women in general. Lastly, the article presents some recommendations for future actions by policy makers to the advancement of women in the public service.

2. Legislative Framework

For the purpose of this article, it is necessary that legislation enhancing gender equality is discussed in order to clarify the fact that the environment has been made conducive by government for women to fully compete for leadership positions in both public and private sectors. According to Van der

Waldt (2007:40) in Nzimakwe (2010:510) legislation can be regarded as a collection of rules devised and enforced by a government that has authority over the public. It ensures that government bodies adhere to the spirit and stipulations of particular legislation in the design and execution of policy programmes. It is therefore understandable that there would be enabling legislation for gender equalities on leadership positions more generally, and, the focus of this article, in municipalities.

2.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

Section 9 (1) and (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 states that "everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law; equality include the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality legislative and other majors designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken". Thus, any government institution that fails to comply with this constitutional provision may be declared unconstitutional since this constitution is the supreme law of the country, South Africa. However, section 9(2) advances fair discrimination that promotes equal opportunity as legitimate when applied to redress the imbalances of the past, and in this case, advancement of women to leadership positions. Furthermore, section 9(3) indicate that "the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth". This provision of the constitution indicates that neither the state nor any other person can disadvantage women by excluding them from leadership position in the South African public service. Moreover, section 195(1) of the constitution provide for the basic values and principles that govern public administration, and (i) specifically, state that "public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation". It is within this context that democracy can only be fully realised if all forms of discrimination as identified in the constitution are eradicated (Penceliah, 2011).

2.2 Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act 55 of 1998)

The Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act 55 of 1998) seeks to further the aspirations of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 in promoting equity in the workplace. However, equity is not possible if men and women competing for the same position are not equal due to previous policies that were not gender-sensitive. Section 2 of the act provide for the purpose of this act as to achieve equity at the workplace by "(a) promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and (b) implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce". Based on this provision of the act, it is apparent that the effective implementation of gender equity depends on three key elements: namely; the elimination of unfair discrimination in human resource policies and practices, the efficient implementation of affirmative action to achieve equitable representation of women at all Senior Management Services (SMS) levels, and accelerating their advancement (Kahn, 2010, in Kahn & Louw, 2011).

2.3 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000 (Act 4 of 2000)

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000 (Act 4 of 2000) defines equality as "the full and equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms as contemplated in the Constitution and includes *de jure* and *de facto* equality and also equality in terms of outcomes". *De jure* is the promotion of equality through legislation, while *de facto* is the promotion of equality through other measures (Kahn and Louw, 2011). In this connection, it is imperative that gender equality should be promoted in all sectors, and to be specific, in this case, in all leadership positions in municipalities.

2.4 White Article on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, 1997

Section 16 of the White Article on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, 1997 state that positions in the public service will be filled by either open, targeted or internal competition with an aim to "identify the most suitable person for the job

from the widest possible pool of talent; make the public service more accessible to all sections of society; achieve employment equity; and provide equal opportunities for advancement for people at all levels within the public service". It should be noted that this white article regards recruitment as the prime instrument for achieving equity by opening up the public service to people of all races, and to women in particular. Furthermore, the fact that the public service environment is unique compared to other sectors, it became important for the South African Government to have this specific white article for the implementation of women advancement to leadership positions in all its institutions.

3. Research Methods

The research design used on this article was in accordance with the qualitative approach. Garbers (1996:283) in Mokoena and van Rooyen (2012) state that the objective of qualitative research is to promote better self-understanding and increase insight into the human condition. He further argues that in qualitative research the emphasis is on improved understanding of human behavior and experience and researchers try to understand the ways in which different individuals make sense of their lives and describe those meanings. In qualitative research, empirical observation is important as researchers need to study real cases of human behavior if they are to be in a position to reflect on human condition meaningfully and with clarity. The fact that this article was conducted within a social sciences context or setting, the selected methodology was appropriate for probing in depth the complexities and processes involved and explored the operations of representation of women in leadership positions in municipalities through observation. The qualitative research method applied in this article was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to interact closely with the subjects in their natural settings.

4. South African Public Service Progress in the Advancement of Women to Leadership Positions

History has proved that women in South Africa were marginalised and treated with contempt. South Africa has a history of institutional racism whereby rights of opportunities depended on race and gender. Sociocultural theories defined women as inferior to men and regarded them as minors in the private and public spheres of life. This

historical patriarchy influenced formal and informal human relationships and the opportunities accorded women in the workplace (Hendrickse, 2004). Thus, the first democratic government developed the White Paper on Transformation in the Public Service, 1995 which stated the government's desire to bring about equality in the public service by setting a target of 30% of SMS posts should have been occupied by women by 1999. The South African Cabinet increased the representation of women to 50% at all SMS in 2009. This notable progress in achieving these targets would allow the public service to utilise the competencies of women optimally, and in that way enhance both women's representation at SMS levels and the public service's performance (Kahn and Louw, 2011). The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has recently released the Annual Report on Employment Equity in the Public Service for 2013/2014 which indicates a slight improvement on women advancement to SMS levels. It states that in the previous year, thirteen departments had met 50% employment equity target for women at SMS, and this number has increased to nineteen departments out of the forty-six in total. Table 1 on the following page presents the representation by race, salary levels and gender of the South African Public Service. The table serves to illustrate that the representation of women of all racial groups is higher from levels 00 to 10 with the pattern changing in favour of men from levels 11 to 16. This is very clear that the representation of men is higher than that of women in the decision making positions.

Furthermore, in comparing the representation of women in all the nine provinces of South Africa, good progress is noted in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and national departments with women at above 40%. However, the lowest representation of women at SMS levels is found in the Free State province, while Mpumalanga Province which forms the base of this article, is ranked number seven. Table 2 on the following page presents the representation of women at SMS levels per province.

Based on the tables on the following page, it appears that the Sustainable Development Goals (specifically *Goal 5: aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*) remain a challenge to some government institutions as the pace of implementation remains slow. Furthermore, it should be noted that this particular trend is not experienced by South Africa alone. It stretches to

Table 1: Representation by Salary Level, Race and Gender

Persal Salary Level	Unknown	African	Asian	Coloured	White	Female	African	Asian	Coloured	White	Male	Grand Total
0	17	0	0	1677	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
1	3039	18201	192	2410	247	20317	9056	139	1681	212	11088	34,444
2	172	34546	194	4405	290	37440	24473	196	2151	361	27181	64,793
3	145	53466	327	1823	776	58974	38305	371	3707	543	42926	102,045
4	34	17504	155	12214	512	19994	12301	173	1390	303	14167	34,195
5	455	114240	1943	6861	5139	133536	85952	1457	9099	1699	98207	232,198
6	134	46046	1453	15002	6247	60607	37851	1305	5546	2153	46855	107,596
7	821	160533	5393	6781	21998	202926	80578	2582	7745	10860	101765	305,512
8	66	65021	2105	6549	8737	82644	38986	1451	5654	6909	53000	135,710
9	107	51448	3143	2551	9032	70172	26604	1552	3895	3329	35380	105,659
10	24	22387	1255	1298	4145	30338	14679	1024	1799	3109	20611	50,973
11	216	10501	1609	736	3620	17028	11876	1193	1587	3289	17945	35,189
12	35	6526	1138	227	2583	10983	9387	1410	1072	3553	15422	26,440
13	18	2128	186	71	387	2928	2946	246	316	545	4053	6,999
14	5	650	68	18	129	918	938	96	127	186	1347	2,270
15	2	171	16	6	28	233	268	35	44	61	408	643
16	1	38	0	62629	5	50	89	6	11	13	118	169
Grand Total	5291	603406	19177	1677	63875	749087	394289	13236	45824	37125	490474	1,244,852

Source: Annual Report on Employment Equity in the Public Service (2016/2017)

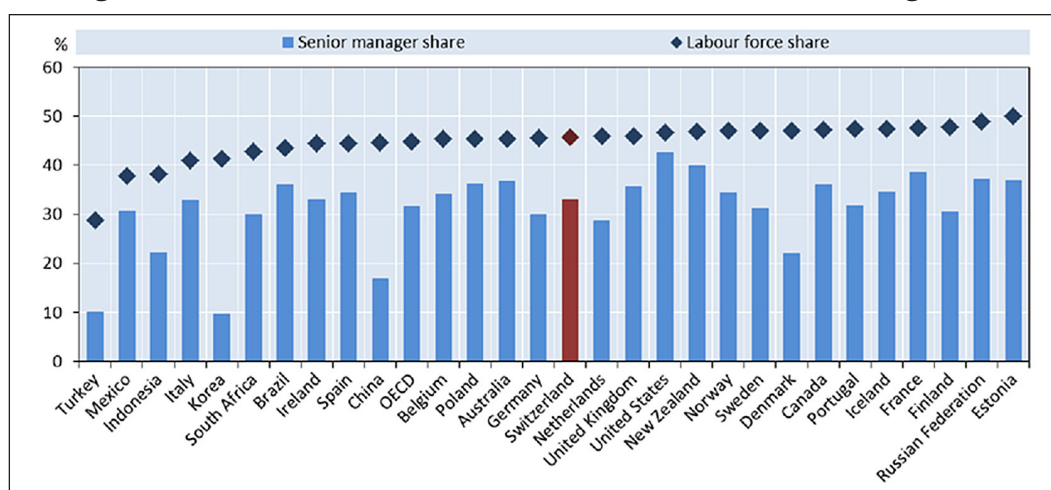
Table 2: Representation of Women at SMS per Province and Gender

Province	Female	Male	Total	%	Ranking
Eastern Cape	256	414	670	38.2%	5
Free State	102	226	328	31.1%	10
Gauteng	322	414	736	43.7%	1
KZN-Natal	232	342	574	40.4%	3
Limpopo	196	294	490	40%	4
Mpumalanga	119	212	331	35.9%	7
National Department	2166	3118	5,284	40.9%	2
North West	112	204	316	35.4%	8
Northern Cape	88	166	254	34.6%	9
Western Cape	141	244	385	36.6%	6
Grand Total	3734	5634	9368	100.00%	

Source: Annual Report on Employment Equity in the Public Service (2013/2014)

all sectors globally. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report, 2014 indicates that gender equality remains a big challenge notwithstanding the important gains that have been made in women's education and employment outcomes in recent history. Most OECD countries have achieved gender parity in education attainment, but women remain severely under-represented in key, growth-enhancing fields of education such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Labour markets exhibit

many "gender gaps". Women are less likely to work for pay, and are more likely to have lower hourly earnings, do more unpaid housework than men and in general the gender gaps of disadvantage in the labour market are more pronounced in the Asia/Pacific region than across the OECD. Women are also underrepresented in business leadership. Figure 1 on the following page shows that there is a significant gap between the participation of women in the labour force and their presence in senior management functions in OECD countries as

Figure 1: Women's Shares in the Labour Force and Senior Management

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report (2014)

Table 3: Representation of Women in Leadership Positions at the Municipalities of Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

EXECUTIVE MAYORS	SPEAKERS	MUNICIPAL MANAGERS
Male: 11 (55%) Female: 9 (45%)	Male: 10 (50%) Female: 10 (50%)	Male: 16 (80%) Female: 2 (10%) Vacant: 2 (10%)
TOTAL: 20	TOTAL: 20	TOTAL: 20

Source: SALGA Mpumalanga Women Commission

well as China. While women across the OECD and in China make up almost 45% of the labour force, they constitute only some 30% of legislators, senior officials and managers. Despite the potential benefits that firms can derive from giving women a more prominent role, they remain under-represented in the business sector in all countries (OECD Report, 2014).

5. Results and Discussions

The gender profile in the above identified leadership positions in municipalities in the Mpumalanga Province, South Africa serves as a good example of a slow pace of the full implementation of gender equalities in the workplace. The province comprises of twenty-one municipalities.

Table 3 above indicates that the municipalities have failed to meet the 50-50 target for leadership positions, notwithstanding that South Africa in general, has fared far better in some national and provincial departments as alluded to above. The Executive Mayor's category seems to have progressed fairly since nine (45%) are women and eleven (55%) are men. The Speaker's category reflects the 50-50

target being met as women are ten (10%) compared to their men counterpart with ten (10%). There is no indication of dominance of men in the Office of Speakers. In terms of the Municipal Managers' category, two (10%) are women while sixteen (80%) are men. The further two (10%) represents the current vacancies. This is an example of purely resistance to change irrespective of the existence of regulations as briefly explained above. This kind of findings has opened a lot of dialogue on this matter. In annual reports, such breakdowns are not explicitly dealt with since reports have a tendency of presenting some consolidated statistics.

6. Barriers to the Advancement of Women

For the purpose of this paper, it is important to highlight some barriers as identified by Shin and Bang (2013):

6.1 Societal Level Factors

The societal level factors refer to the broad societal forces and policies perpetuate assumptions and stereotypes which present challenges to women

in leadership roles. The examples of policies are the once related to employment equity, human rights, access to affordable day care and reproductive rights have a profound impact on the ability of women to advance in the workplace.

6.2 Organisational Level Factors

Organisational level factors refer to the conflict between work and family. It is argued that many women workers are also mothers. Their husbands and children may provide some burden that may negatively impact their chances at work's leadership position.

6.3 Individual Level Factors

It is argued that at the individual level, women show lack of confidence to succeed often leads to making decisions that affect their careers prospects. The examples in this regards relate to the sense of diminished self-efficacy and communication style.

6.4 Male Stereotyping

This phenomenon is an example of a sense of diminished self-efficacy identified above. Male stereotyping is one of the key barriers to the advancement of women. It argued that gender stereotyping occurs when employees are judged according to traditional stereotyping based on gender.

6.5 Conflicting Roles

As mentioned above, women sometimes encounter difficulties in balancing work and family responsibilities. Perhaps women have to answer the question "What aspects of family commitments are perceived as restricting career progress?" But this question should not be seen as the only one to answer; indeed, women do make difficult choices related to career advancement.

6.6 Lack of Support from Other Managers in the Public Service

Research indicates that there is lack of support amongst women leaders themselves. It can be argued that if an initiative could be formed whereby women at the workplace could engage on their general work challenges confronted on their different work environment may reach to a level of a uniform

concerted approach. Such initiative will be a supportive programme for newly promoted women learning from each other.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examined the representation of women within SMS of the South African public service. Reference was further given to the leadership positions in municipalities of the Mpumalanga Province, that is, Executive Mayors, Speakers, and Municipal Managers. The statistics analysis revealed that as at March 2014, there were 9 368 filled SMS positions of which 3 734 (39.8%) were filled by women and 5 634 (60.2%) were filled by men. Of the 39.8% posts occupied by women, 72% consisted of African women, 14% Whites, 8% Coloureds and 6% Asians (Annual Report on Employment Equity in the Public Service 2013/2014). As mentioned above, in the Mpumalanga Province the Executive Mayor's category seems to have progressed fairly since nine (45%) are women and eleven (55%) are men. The Speaker's category reflects an equal distribution trend as women are 10 (50%) and 10 (50%) for men. There is no indication of dominance of men in the Office of Speakers. In terms of the Municipal Managers' category, two (10%) are women, another two (10%) appears as current vacancies while sixteen (80%) are men. These results suggest that it will take very long time for women to gain equality with men in leadership positions in the South African government institutions. Although the government's legislation favour women to realise the 50-50 representation, it still not been met in 2018. Government needs to continue to remove the bearers and put much stronger measures to achieve equal representation in its institutions on the one hand, and on the other hand, women must also show interest on this administrative leadership positions. Based on the above barriers and the South African public service situation, South Africa is still dominated by men in leadership positions in government institutions. A radical integrated strategy which affects change at societal, organisation and individual levels should be established by the South African Government. One can recommend that *firstly*, women must have the support and commitment of executive leadership who have the power to influence change across organisations and society. This action will force a quick implementation of the legislation and strategies of women advancement. Furthermore, the aspect of men stereotyping could disappear. *Secondly*, balancing work and family

should not be a challenge only if there is willingness from organisations to introduce programmes that would empower women to balance work and family obligations. *Thirdly*, stories about women's successes must be shared in both organisations and society. The media should be used extensively in this regard. *Finally*, organisations or government institutions must continue providing mentorship programmes and other training to women so that they can realise their potential and strength in the workplace. These recommendations are limited to the barriers discussed above.

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