

Unrepresentation of women in educational leadership

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Abstract

Even though in recent decades there have been significant changes in the position of women in employment, it has been observed internationally that women do not participate to a great extent in decision-making and in the high levels of the occupational hierarchy. In education, women are overrepresented at the lower levels whereas in positions of administrative leadership and in positions higher up in the hierarchy their representation is far lower than that of men. The purpose of this research is to study the phenomenon of underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in education in different countries, by pointing to existing research and presenting its results. Emphasis is placed on research which is carried out in Greece and Cyprus.

Keywords: women, sex, underrepresentation, glass ceiling, leadership, secondary education

Introduction

Education is feminine, but the administration is masculine. In 1980, Strober and Tyack (1980, as ref. to Hatzipanagiotou, 1997) raised the question "Why do women teach and men manage." 35 years later, the question remains unanswered.

Nobody can deny the fact of the increasing female presence in different areas of modern society. The rapid social, economic, political and cultural developments of the past three centuries have changed the institution of the family (Katakis, 1998; Dechaux, 2008) and led the woman to the labor market. However, women are still considered as "captives" of prejudices and stereotypes which support the institutional and ideological male superiority at all levels of social and economic life.

Regarding the labor market, the road to gender equality appears to be long. Recruitment, payroll, but mainly the promotion to higher positions, highlight the unequal treatment between men and women (Theofilou, 2008). Especially in the field of education, the phenomenon of low representation of women teachers in the administrative hierarchy of the system is observed in many European countries such as Greece, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Norway (Morton, 2002)^[11], and has been studied by many researchers internationally (Limerick & Anderson, 1999; Coleman, 2001; Coleman, 2005)^[9, 2, 3], but in Greece (Maragoudaki, 1997; Saiti, 2000; Kyriakoussis & Saiti, 2006; Kaparou & Bush, 2007)^[8, 7].

In Cyprus, there are significant changes in the status of women in employment. It is found that there is little participation in decision-making and high levels of the occupational hierarchy. In education, the Cypriot women are overrepresented at the lower levels, whereas in the positions of administrative leadership and hierarchy there is underrepresentation (Charalampidou, 2003).

The purpose of this research is to study the phenomenon of women's underrepresentation in the administration of schools.

The phenomenon of "glass ceiling"

In 1986 journalists Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt attempted to describe the obstacles encountered by women in

their efforts to advance to higher levels of administration. They used the term "glass ceiling", commenting that "those few women who reach high levels of hierarchy, suddenly, just before stepping up to the top, they crash like they are captured onto an invisible barrier as a "glass ceiling" although they can see what prevents them from attaining the top" (as ref. to Antrikogiannopoulou, 2010).

The phenomenon of the glass ceiling is often mentioned in literature, in an attempt to define the difficulties that block the recruitment, promotion and career development of women. Indeed, sometimes the term is replaced by the terms "labyrinth, the passage of which is not prohibited, but it is particularly complex, complicated, unpredictable and requires great persistence, patience and, sometimes, the ability to be able to solve puzzles" (Antrikogiannopoulou, 2010).

Pilavaki (2008) defines the "glass ceiling" as follows: "An invisible barrier arising from a complex set of structures in organizations / enterprises, dominated by men and results in preventing the assignment of senior positions to women". The same research also refers to "sticky floors", which is the tendency for the majority of women to stay to lower levels of hierarchy, doing the most poorly paid and least responsible tasks while they never reach higher positions.

Sex and educational administration

The first wave of feminism in the late 19th century, spots the subordination of women to men and aims at improving this position through wider access to education and paid employment (Kladouchou, 2005). Education was one of the first places that welcomed women as workers, giving them the opportunity for social action and economic independence (Maragoudaki, 1997). The profession of teacher was identified with the maternal role of women, considering the school as a family extension, where the woman-mother-teacher could provide the sensitivity, tolerance, kindness and love for the children (Ziogou-Karastergiou, 2006).

Worldwide, in primary education, women's rates as teachers for 2010 ranged from 65% in Greece to 98% in Slovenia. The male teachers in the countries of Italy, Hungary, Latvia,

Lithuania, Slovenia and the Czech Republic were approximately only 5% of all teachers or less. In secondary education the proportion of women teachers stood between 52% in Liechtenstein and 86% in Latvia, while this percentage reduced dramatically in higher levels of education (European Network Eurydice, 2010).

Therefore, the teaching profession can be considered as a “women’s job” (Davis, 2003; Skelton, 2002) [4, 14] in Cyprus and across Europe (Mehra & Gammage, 1999; Morton, 2002) [10, 11], with women teachers to be the majority in primary and secondary education. Women prefer the teaching profession as well, so they can combine their responsibilities at home and at work, since the favorable conditions in the profession are more suited to family and domestic commitments (Weiner, 2005) [16].

Although women are overrepresented in low levels of education, this is not the case in the higher levels associated with the management and decision-making mechanisms, where their underrepresentation is obvious (Davis, 2003; Skelton, 2002; Limerick & Anderson, 1999; Coleman, 2001; Coleman, 2005; Maragoudaki, 1997; Saitis, 2000; Kyriakoussis & Saiti, 2006; Kaparou & Busha, 2007; Charalambidou-Solomi, 2003) [4, 14, 9, 2, 3, 8, 7]. In the higher levels of educational leadership and administrative hierarchy the number of women is very small. Women usually occupy low and middle positions, confirming the view of Strober and Tyack regarding the administrative hierarchy of education that “women teach and men manage” (as ref. to Hatzipanagiotou, 1997).

In Cyprus, the phenomenon of the glass ceiling in education seems to be one of the greatest weaknesses of the education system. This was noted by the survey of UNESCO in 1997 (Alexander & Vryonides, 2008).

Women and Educational Leadership

Women are the vast majority of teachers in primary and secondary education, at European and international level. However, female representation decreases significantly in higher levels of education (European Network Eurydice, 2010).

Several studies in Europe and America recorded this contradictory status of women teachers, who are considered able to teach, but not able to lead. Research in the United

States of America shows that, compared to men, women-teachers are less likely to fill leadership positions. Specifically between the years 1993-94 and 2003-04 the percentage of women-principals in primary education increased from 41% to 56%, while in secondary education the percentage reached only to 26% from 14% (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010) [13].

In Europe, the participation of women in managerial positions is correlated with the education level. For example, in primary schools in Bulgaria, France, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom and Iceland, over 70% of principals are women. This percentage decline rapidly in secondary education (European Network Eurydice, 2010).

In a survey of Acker (1989) in England, it appeared that 78% of teachers in primary education are women, while the percentage drops to 30% when it comes to principals. In 2003, Coleman reported that in 2001 in England, secondary schools consisted 54.3% of women as teachers, while only 31.2% of them had a managerial position.

But, later, in 2004, the investigation of Department of education and skills (DfES) in the United Kingdom presented that 31% of principals and 39% of deputy principals of the schools were women. Taken together, women held half of the teacher population.

In New Zealand, in 2005, women were underrepresented in primary education, although they held over 80% of the entire teaching staff. In secondary education the percentage of their participation in leadership positions reached approximately 30%, with women holding 56% of the total teaching staff in the country (Strachan et al., 2007) [15].

In Greece, a very important survey from Fouseki (1994) showed in secondary education that, for the school year 1991-1992, women teachers and accounted for 63.2% of total teachers, but only 40% held managerial positions. In the following years, many researchers reached to similar conclusions about the Greek educational reality (Papanoum, 1995; Maragoudaki, as ref. to Hatzipanagiotou, 1997), confirming the female minority both in the administration of schools, and in high places of educational leadership.

In 1997, Wilson (1997: 209) [17] compared and recorded data from eight countries of the European Union, on the representation of women teachers in primary and secondary educational units.

Table 1. Percentage distribution of women as teachers and principals in primary and secondary education

Country	Primary Education Teachers %	Primary Education Principals %	Secondary Education Teachers %	Secondary Education Principals %
England (1992)	81	49	49	26
France (1995)	79	64	56	30
Greece (1995)	50	41	53	36
Hungary (1995)	85	33	97	30
Ireland (1996)	78	46	54	29
Italy (1995)	93	46	63	30
Netherlands (1996)	76	13	33	7
Norway (1994)	74	40	39	22
Spain (1995)	74	47	50	20

More recent research (Trachanopoulou & Trachanopoulou, 2008), showed that 77.4% of men are principals in secondary schools, while only 22.6% are women, proving once more

that women seem to be excluded from the educational leadership, leaving their male peers in higher levels of the labor hierarchy. It reached the same conclusion and the

research), which states that, in 2007, 42 women candidates stood for Subdirector in 10 thesia and upper primary schools of Primary Education of Achaia, against 32 men and selected 26 women versus 21 men.

Additionally, the research of Rapti (2008) and Saiti & Saiti (2012), came to the conclusion that women teachers are excluded from senior management positions, they are underrepresented in managerial positions, but they are represented in a large percentage to lower positions of the education hierarchy, such as those of assistant principal.

So, despite the fact that, with specific law (law 3488/2006), the Greek state supports and promotes equal opportunities between the sexes in employment and education, women teachers are more likely to remain in the lower hierarchical positions compared with their male peers, mainly taking the teaching part of the education, leaving the leadership for the men. In addition, the research of Emmanuel (2002), describes public education in Cyprus during the school years 1995-2000. The survey shows that, although men are clearly fewer than women teachers, they are, however, more likely to be promoted to senior management positions. The most recent data from the Education Service Commission (Department of Labour Relations), for the school year 2012-2013 show that, in primary education, men are represented twice as often as principals, with respect to women, although the latter are more in numbers.

Discussion

The modern woman is not second to men regarding to staff training and broader education level. What is needed is an internal reinforcement in order to discover her potential. Additionally, a change of mentality and culture of her social milieu is essential. This will bring equality of the sexes both in education and in society in general. As stated in the report of the International Conference on Population and Development-ICPD (1994) "Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and confidence which are needed to encourage their participation in development processes".

Education can be a trigger in empowering women and eliminating the phenomenon of gender prejudices through equitable attitudes and behaviors of teachers towards the students, but also through the organization of the educational system (textbooks, curriculum, teaching approaches/methods etc.). It is also necessary to train the teachers in equal opportunities and gender rights in the form of training programs, seminars etc. Especially for women leaders, training could work as incentive.

In addition, on a social level, it is important for a framework to be created. This framework will create innovative working conditions, more flexible, in order to enable women to combine career with family.

The phenomenon of underrepresentation of women in positions of educational leadership proved complex and multidimensional. The woman teacher can and should evolve easily and freely in all working layers, and higher, without the existence of negative stereotypes against her and she should be free from stress to balance family and professional life. The state has to offer to the woman the chance to participate including management and decision-making" (Charalambides-Solomi, 2003). An end must be given to glass ceiling regarding women's career and a new start for the

complete and universal equality of the sexes, without inequality, discrimination and barriers.

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