

The Experiences of Female Head Teachers in Rural Primary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract

The under-representation of women in leadership positions in primary schools is common in many developing countries, raising issues of equity, social justice and sustainable development. This article presents part of an investigation for a Master's dissertation (Parsaloi, 2012). The broad research aim was to investigate the lived experiences of women heading public rural primary schools in Kenya, and to explore possible strategies that may be applied to improve women's participation in educational leadership in rural primary schools in Kenya. This article is limited to the findings regarding the lived experiences of female head teachers in rural primary schools within Kajiado County in Kenya. The data were gathered using qualitative methods, which included interviews with 15 female head teachers, observation at their 15 schools and field-notes. The women gave rich descriptions of the various aspects of their work-lives within the context of sharing the challenges and strengths experienced in their careers. The findings revealed rich descriptions of participants' professional and personal experiences prior to and in their head teacher positions. The study found that the participation of women in primary school leadership positions could be enhanced by means of mentoring and appropriate training programmes for the preparation for leadership

Keywords: women leadership, primary schools, Kenya

Full text: <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/gab/article/view/89776>