

Good Governance, Public Service Leadership of Women and Public Administration Education: What is the Relationship?

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Abstract: The study explores the relationship between women leadership in public administration and the role of education and highlights the interrelated ideas that women in power is linked to good governance and that good education is a contributing factor to getting women into leadership positions.

Effectiveness of government, political stability and control over corruption are three worldwide indicators of good governance and these systems are strengthened when women participate and have leadership role in public administration. Available data from recent studies indicate that women play a key role in ensuring good governance in a state while as the same time, good governance promotes women's participation in government and public administration. Thus, the relationships between female representation in government and good governance is bi-directional.

Studies reveal that there are obstacles that still prevent women from taking leadership positions. They are connected with deep-seated historic, cultural, and socio-economic issues and specifics. But there are a number of factors (enablers) that can move women on the right track to achieve their goals and education is one of them. Education matters to women's leadership, because good education brings out the inherent leadership qualities in women and enables them to establish themselves as great leaders. In the field of public administration education Standards of Excellence have had a strong and positive influence on the education and training of public leaders on global scale. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development indicated that the time has come the Standards to be reviewed and upgraded in order to reflect new developments in public administration.

Key words: women leadership, governance, public administration, gender equality, education, standards of excellence.

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Introduction: The study aims to review, analysis and outline the bi-directional relationships between women representation in government and good governance, because these systems are strengthened when women participate and have leadership role in public administration. Although gender parity is essential for an inclusive and accountable public administration, comparative data suggests that there is high variation of women's participation across countries and that as a whole women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making position in public administration worldwide. In reality, gender parity is essential for an inclusive and accountable public administration, it is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 but achieving it is far off.

The new developments have largely determined the theoretical and methodological framework, and the analytical methods and tools, adopted and applied in this study, are suited to its aim and objectives. They are basically drawn on studies and peer-reviewed publications conducted by scholars and researchers, as well as on reports of international organizations, media articles, surveys and expert opinions. Consequently, most of the analysis is based on comprehensive literature review, internet articles and reports. The internet is a very helpful tool to extract relevant information. In addition, appropriate methods to be used are content analysis and comparative analysis, which helps to understand that different contexts affect the results in different way. All research findings and conclusions are based on available data from publications of international organizations such as UNDP, UN Women organization, Wilson center, United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN), IASIA as well as on personal observations and experience.

Women Representation in Public Administration and Good Governance

In modern times developing public administration leaders capable of creativity and possessing the ability to lead is critical for shaping the future of government and the public sector services it delivers. Today women are resolved to break the traditional glass ceiling that barred them from entering leadership positions and they are making their leadership presence across a wide spectrum of human activities at regional, national and global levels.

Global commitments to gender equality in public life are not new. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 and the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 have called for the equal participation of women and men in public life, decision-making and policy formation, and have urged governments to take action to close gender gaps. Today gender equality is at the core of an inclusive and accountable public administration. An important indicator of progress on gender equality is parity – equal numbers of women and men employed and leading in public administration. This single measure does not capture the whole of

gender equality, which is the greater goal in public institutions. Neither does this measure acknowledge the intersectional needs of women, including; those with disabilities; racial and ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples; and those who face discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or age.

In the field of governance and public administration all available data from recent studies and reports of international organizations such as UNDP, UN Women organization, Wilson center, United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) clearly indicate that when women take leadership roles governments are more responsive and more accountable, the quality of public services delivered significantly improves and trust and public confidence in state organizations boost. These findings are reinforced by the 50x50 Report by the Wilson Center (2018) that concludes: “where there are more women in power, there is better governance, and where there is good governance, there are more women in power.”²

Public administration as it is defined by UNDP (2014) is the bedrock of government and the central instrument through which national policies and programmes are implemented. In an ideal world, public administration is guided by principles of fairness, accountability, justice, equality and non-discrimination, and serves as a model of governance for society, which includes the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the civil service workforce.

The basis for evaluating the governance effectiveness is the Governance Indicators, which are used worldwide as a tool to assess governance challenges and monitor reforms. The overall evaluation of the government performance is based on the following definition of governance: it consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them. The performance of governments is evaluated against all indicators (Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law and Control of Corruption) and a full and objective picture of the governance is displayed only when all indicators are viewed together³.

Effectiveness of government, political stability and control over corruption are three worldwide indicators of good governance and these systems are strengthened when women

2 The Roadmap to 50x50: Power and Parity in Women’s Leadership report, (2018), at https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/roadmap_to_50x50-_power_and_parity_in_womens_leadership.pdf

3 www.info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp

participate and have leadership role in public administration. The Global Corruption Barometer, produced by Transparency International, is the only worldwide public opinion survey on corruption and its reports from the past years indicate that women are less prone to taking bribes than men. Furthermore, a 1999 study published by the World Bank claimed that women were more trustworthy and public-spirited than men and concluded that greater representation of women in parliament in a sample of 150 countries in Europe, Africa and Asia led to lower levels of corruption.

Women play a key role in ensuring good governance in a state while at the same time, good governance promotes women's participation in government and public administration. In this way, the relationships between female representation in government and good governance is bi-directional. In addition, access of women to leadership roles is very productive, their participation in public administration and in decision-making roles is positively correlated with economic development as well as gender equality in society and creates conducive environment for a better and more effective government⁴. Thus, women's equal leadership in public administration and political life is essential for an inclusive and accountable public administration as well as for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, endorsed by governments in 2015. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aims to increase women's participation and leadership in public institutions in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly SDG5 (gender equality) and SDG16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) through their work to ensure Gender Equality in Public Administration. However, data show that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide, and that achieving gender parity in public administration is far off.

In this context it is worth mentioning some research findings from UNDP: women make up on average 45% of public administration and they occupy just 31 percent of top leadership positions. Women constitute a meagre 23 percent of public administrators in fragile and conflict-affected countries. There is high variation of women's participation across countries, ranging from 6% to 77%. The overall share of women in public administration is highest, on average, in OECD countries (55.1%), and lowest in the Arab States (35.9%). It is just 20% of countries that have reached parity (50%) in the share of women in decision-making positions of public administration.

⁴Gender Equality in Public Administration Report, (2021), UNDP at https://www.undp.org/publications/global-report-gender-equality-public-administration?utm_source=EN&utm_medium=GSR&utm_content=US_UNDP_PaidSearch_Brand_English&utm_campaign=CENTRAL&c_src=CENTRAL&c_src2=GSR&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIjZ3s9Krt_AIVugYGAB1QiAMuEAAAYASAAEgJYZvD_BwE

A worrying trend from this UNDP report from 2021 comes to light that as the level of decision-making power and influence increases, women's numbers decline.

Women remain concentrated in some policy areas and starkly underrepresented in others. While women's numbers are highest in ministries focused on women's issues, health and education, they are underrepresented in policy areas such as Public Works and Transportation (the lowest share of women) and this limits women's influence on policymaking and their ability to effect change overall. Progress towards gender parity is evident in three high-profile policy areas traditionally considered the domain of men: ministries of defence, foreign affairs and finance. Globally, women average 41 percent of finance ministries, 40 percent of foreign affairs ministries, and 36 percent of defence ministries. Between 2010 and 2020, women's average share of positions increased by 11 percentage points in ministries of defence, 6 in foreign affairs, and 10 in finance. Still, sizeable gender gaps in these high-profile areas remain in some countries, particularly in defence ministries. In most parts of the world, women's participation in environmental protection ministries remains low. Women's participation in ministries of environmental protection averages 33 percent globally – among the lowest of the 20 policy areas included in this report. Parity in decision-making in environmental protection is exceptionally rare. Over time, there is little evidence that countries are making substantial progress towards gender parity in environmental protection ministries.

Another source of information about women in executive government positions is the data, published by UN Women organization, which is dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.⁵ As of September 2022, according to UN Women organization, there are 28 countries where 30 women serve as Heads of State and/or Government. At the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years. Just 13 countries have a woman Head of State, and 15 countries have a woman Head of Government. Only 21 per cent of government ministers were women, with only 14 countries having achieved 50 per cent or more women in cabinets. With an annual increase of just 0.52 percentage points, gender parity in ministerial positions will not be achieved before 2077. The five most commonly held portfolios by women ministers are: Family/ children/ youth/ elderly/ disabled; followed by Social affairs; Environment/ natural resources/ energy; Employment/ labour/ vocational training, and Women affairs/ gender equality.

⁵ https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#_edn1

As for Bulgaria, men still dominate politics and public life, but at the same time women's influence grows in Bulgaria. For Europe, the visible side of change began in 1979 with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Britain's Prime Minister. Since then, dozens of women on the continent have held the highest executive positions, with Angela Merkel ruling the longest. In Bulgaria, during the difficult transition since Communism fell, women have been promoted to leadership positions in government and public administration and they include the current Vice-president of the Republic, the former speaker of Parliament, the minister of justice, the minister of foreign affairs, the mayor of Sofia, etc. There was one woman prime-minister in the caretaker government who ruled for three months in 1994. According to NSI data, the ratio of men to women in the parliament in 2018 was 72.9% to 27.1% and in the government – 76.2% to 23.8%. There are leading political and psychological analysts and researchers who argue that women have had high positions because “they were nonthreatening and loyal”⁶. For other scientists the stereotypes that “politics is a man's job” definitely have a role to play⁷, because the place of women in communist countries was an element of ideology – it was a norm for women to be mothers and wives, to work, to vote, sometimes – and to take leadership positions. In Bulgaria the first minister was appointed in 1947, and later there few others who appeared on the political scene.

It is important to underline that there are many countries, where public institutions continue to be male-dominated and patriarchal, maintaining bad and harmful attitudes and practices. In addition, there is no global baseline on women's participation in public administration and to make comparisons across countries should be approached with caution. There are several factors that pose challenges to comparability and generalizability. First, public administration can look very different from one country to the next and some of the key differences across countries include the size of public administration, the degree of centralization, and the sectors and jobs that are included. Second, countries use different approaches to collect and process high-quality statistics. As public administration is typically a large and sprawling institution, including thousands or even millions of individuals across different levels of government, sectors and agencies, official data omit some sectors, levels, or positions, either by design or practicality. In addition, countries also use different approaches to generate statistics: some compile administrative data, and others, field labour force surveys. Last but not least, countries report varying measures of gender parity publicly. This leads to considerable differences in data availability from one statistic to the next.

⁶ Bilefsky, D., Women's Influence Grows in Bulgarian Public Life at <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/08/world/europe/08iht-bulgwomen.html>

⁷ Bulgaria: Why are the Women Politicians Always Second? at <https://www.novinite.com/articles/211866/Bulgaria%3A+Why+are+the+Women+Politicians+Always+Second%3F>

For example, data on gender parity in public administration overall are available for 163 countries, whereas gender-disaggregated data on decision-making levels are available in 126 countries. Intersectional data are particularly scarce.

Despite different approaches used to generate statistics, any global or regional analysis clearly show that gender equality in public administration is a key step towards women's empowerment in public life and building representative, just and effective institutions. There are at least three reasons for it. First, public administration is the primary institution responsible for implementing national policies and programmes, tasks in which women should be included equally. Including women in public administration not only recognizes their right to participation and equal access to public service, but it may also help governments function better by improving service delivery, encouraging citizen engagement, and increasing trust and confidence in government. Second, in many countries, public administration is the single largest employer. Therefore, building equal public administration workplaces – ensuring gender balance in participation and leadership, adopting and implementing legal and policy frameworks that support gender equality, and building inclusive institutional cultures – has the potential to transform the lives and livelihoods of millions of workers worldwide. In addition, public administration can set a standard for other workplaces such as corporations, small businesses, non-profits, colleges and universities, because when public administration is guided by principles of fairness, equality and justice, it can provide a model for the society it serves. Therefore, to ensure inclusive development and democratic governance, to restore trust and confidence in public institutions and to enhance the sustainability and responsiveness of public policies it is of key importance to close gender gaps in public administration.

As a matter of fact, gender equality in public administration nowadays is more an aspiration than a reality despite global commitments across the world. Historically, patriarchal cultures and practices have undermined gender equality in public administration. While women are well-represented in public administration in many countries, they remain significantly outnumbered by men in leadership and decision-making positions.

Importance of Women Leadership Today

It is generally assumed that leadership is not gender-specific and that every organizations needs a leader, irrespective of its size and functions. It is considered that a leaderless organization is a “muddle of men and machine”, a country without leadership is anarchy, a society without leadership is a violent and dangerous to live. The hallmark of leadership is the capacity to influence others towards accomplishing goals and towards betterment. Leaders can be either men or women, but men and women mostly show and demonstrate distinctly different styles of leadership. A

number of studies have found out some of the common characteristics of women leaders: transformational leadership style (women leaders function as a role model for their subordinates, they inspire their team, they care about their development, they emphasize teamwork and authentic communication as a key to success); women are task-focused and they promote cooperation and collaboration; etc.

For all this, in the present century, any institution whether it is society or organization, cannot function effectively without women's equal participation in leadership activities. Women create a perspective that brings to collaboration and competition to organizations and teams. In 21st century, the essential qualities required to lead include the ability to collaborate, connect, empathize and communicate and all these qualities are feminine in nature and can help build a more sustainable future. Consequently, it is important to outline and underline the necessary factors that enable women to rise and become true leaders.

Creating a pleasant and friendly environment in countries and organizations is necessary to promote women leadership. The factors and conditions which enable them to reach the top are called enablers. There are a number of enablers such as supportive family, good education, equal employment opportunity, public policies, secure social environment, etc. and some of them (social-cultural, political/ business environment) are a sine qua non for women occupying leadership positions.

Supportive family as the basic social institution has profound influence on individuals. It is a great enabler for women leadership, it not only inspires a female, but also empowers her by providing moral, physical and economic support. Therefore, a supportive family provides the basic platform to women to pursue their career goals and establishes themselves as leaders.

At the same time education is a great liberator, because it liberates women from the chains of age-old superstitions, traditions and beliefs that exist in a society. In this regard it is appropriate to mention a famous proverb that says "if you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family".

Education helps women acquire knowledge, understand general relations, develop a sense of self-worth, a belief in their ability, ignore gender discrimination, it creates in them self-confidence and enables them to bring out the best in them and make them accepted as a mass leader. It also acquaints them with women leaders of different countries and their leadership styles. It exposes them to the world and helps them know the conditions of women in different countries and different societies. Good education brings out the inherent qualities in women and enables them to establish themselves as great leaders.

In general, investing in women's education has a direct effect on reducing poverty and leads to improved health outcomes for a woman and her family. Educated women join the local labor

force and drive forward the local economic activity, leading to faster economic growth. As a vast body of evidence has demonstrated, closing the gender gap in education has far-reaching benefits to local communities and society at large. The Leadership Index⁸, developed to measure the global progress towards achieving equal participation in public service leadership, clearly indicates that education matters for getting women into leadership positions worldwide. The Leadership Index uses nearly 100 indicators across 75 countries to measure the 3 P's to Parity (Pathways, Positions, and Power) and that base to categorize countries in four distinct groups - Balanced Parity, Flat Parity, Siloed Parity and Pursuing Parity. It is argued that the type of education (formal vs. informal) is contextually specific and for Balanced Parity countries, only formal education (high school, bachelor's, master's, etc.) strongly correlates with women attaining high-ranking leadership positions. Thus, we can assume that it is indeed formal education that gets results for women's leadership in these countries.

Balanced Parity Countries are countries where women can be found in all types of positions at the highest levels and across policy functions and they include most Scandinavian countries, as well as Canada, France, Peru, Iceland, South Africa and Uruguay. This finding does not hold true for the remainder of the countries in the Leadership Index – formal education does not lead to leadership positions for Siloed Parity, Flat Parity, and Pursuing Parity countries. The most important finding of the Leadership Index is that all types of education are important for getting women into leadership positions worldwide: both formal and informal. For Balanced Parity countries, it is formal education that gets results for women's leadership, while for the remainder of the countries, vocational skills and literacy matter more for women entering leadership positions than high levels of formal education.

Obviously, since there are a number of factors and conditions, which enable women to reach the top, there are also several barriers that can hamper (hinder) the growth of women into independent leader. Some of them include glass ceiling, gender disparity, maintaining work-life balance, professional competence, etc. In addition, there is a stereotypical view of gender role that considers women less competent than men and as a result, there exists a gender gap in the assessment of male and female employees. Cultural biases and social arrangements overrate men and underate women. For this reason it is necessary to find and determine the criteria for common competences for leadership positions, and to evaluate both the transformational leadership of women and transactional leadership of men.

Applying the term “professional competence” in this context to refer to abilities and skills possessed by a person to perform professional duties and responsibilities as efficiently and

⁸The Leadership Index provides a country-by-country snapshot of where women are in governments across the globe, how they got there and how much power they wield. More about the Leadership Index in: *The Roadmap to 50x50: Power and Parity in Women's Leadership*, (2018), Wilson Center.

effectively as possible, it is obvious that the nature and characteristics of such abilities and skills vary from profession to profession. In the field of public administration it is critical for shaping the future of government and the public sector services it delivers to develop professionalism in the public service, and especially to develop public sector leaders capable of creativity and possessing the ability to lead not only economic and social development, but to have knowledge and skills needed to guide the various processes necessary to ensure sustainable development and the achievement of national development agendas.

Public Administration Education and Standards of Excellence

In the last decades the demands for public administration leaders has grown rapidly and will undoubtedly continue to do so. In this regard there are important issues and challenges which must be addressed. Some of them include the responsibility for the development of the capacities and competencies of civil servants, the standards to be used to judge the capacities of the public administrators and what is in place to guide universities, management development institutes and other training institutes in training public servants.

Given the critical problems facing the increasingly complex public sector, two international organizations have joined their efforts in pursuing strategies to enhance the quality of the education and training in public administration.⁹ The most notable response to this concern was a joint initiative of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) and the Division of Public Administration and Development Management of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DPADM) to establish a Task Force on Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training. In 2008 the Task force issued a report, which was accepted by UN/DPADM and by IASIA at its annual conference in Kampala, Uganda. The report¹⁰ included the eight Standards of Excellence, as well as criteria by which one might assess an institution's progress towards achieving excellence. The belief of the task force is that the purpose of public administration education and training is to provide public administrators with the competencies and capacities to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life and the building of a better world, especially for the most economically, socially and politically disadvantaged members of society. Initially, the idea of IASIA was the Standards of Excellence would serve principally as a developmental instrument which could be used by any institution for self-assessment and institutional development. In brief, the eight Standards of Excellence are:

⁹ Katsamunski, P., & A. Rosenbaum, (2019), Strengthening Governmental Effectiveness through Improved Public Administration Education and Training: The United Nations/ IASIA Task Force and The Creation of the International Commission on Public Administration Education and Training (ICAPA), In: Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences, Romania, 2019: Issue No. 57 E/June, pp. 21-33, Online ISSN: 2247-8310 Print ISSN: 1842-2845.

¹⁰ http://www.atlas101.ca/pm/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/UN-IASIA_Standards.pdf

1. Public Service Commitment: The faculty and administration of the program are defined by their fundamental commitment to public service and they are in all of their activities at all times committed to the advancement of the public interest and the building of democratic institutions. This includes all programmatic activities at local, regional, national and international levels.

2. Advocacy of Public Interest Values: All efforts of the faculty and administration should create a culture of participation, commitment, responsiveness and accountability in all of the organizations and institutions with which they come into contact. In so doing, they prepare students and trainees to provide the highest quality of public service.

3. Combining Scholarship, Practice and Community Service: Public administration is an applied science and the program is committed to the integration of theory and practice. All involved in the program are actively engaged through its teaching, training, research and service activities with all of its stakeholder communities, from the city neighborhood to the global community at large.

4. The Faculty are Central: The commitment and quality of the faculty is central to the achievement of program goals in all areas of activity. There must be a full-time, core faculty committed to the highest standards of teaching, training and research.

5. Inclusiveness is at the Heart of the Program: The commitment on the part of faculty to the diversity of ideas and participation is a critical element. Both forms of inclusiveness, intellectual and participatory, are the hallmarks of excellent programs.

6. A Curriculum that is Purposeful and Responsive: The development of public administrators with strong, positive contributions to the public service generally and, in particular, to the organizations they join, is a principal goal and this requires programs to have coherent missions that drive program organization and curriculum development.

7. Adequate Resources are Critical: An important prerequisite is the availability of adequate resources and many different kinds of resources are required including facilities, technology, library resources and student services.

8. Balancing Collaboration and Competition: There must be among all involved in the program a sense of common purpose and mission deriving from the program's commitment to the advancement of the public interest. There must also be a sense of determination, indeed, even competitiveness, that drives the program to meet and exceed world class standards of excellence.

The release of the Task Force Report was followed by a variety of UN/DPADM initiatives to both publicize and encourage the utilization of the Standards throughout the world. This included organizing workshops on the Standards and their use in many parts of the world, including Uganda, Italy, Brazil, Poland and Indonesia. Additional efforts were made to promote the Standards through

the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) and to publicize the Standards of Excellence at a number of UN-sponsored and organized conferences in many parts of the world.

Individual institutions also started to utilize the Standards of Excellence as a vehicle to carry out their own self-assessment activities or to help the governments to establish national training organizations in some countries. They include the School of Public Administration of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, the National Institute of Public Administration of Finland, the Chinese Academy of Governance, etc. This, in turn led, to the translation of the final report of the UN/IASIA Task Force into a variety of languages including Arabic, Chinese, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish and its publication on the UN website.

This quite extensive utilization of the Standards of Excellence Report led to a decision to initiate a worldwide system of accreditation of public administration education and training. In 2012 IASIA initiated a worldwide system for the accreditation of public administration education and training programs and established an International Commission on Accreditation of Public Administration Education and Training Programs (ICAPA)¹¹, which was composed of a number of leading figures in the field from throughout the world.

An effective accreditation process can produce numerous benefits for the participating institution and carefully developed standards, whether highly specific or more general, provide critically important guidelines that enable the program faculty to engage in a process of self-assessment and reflection about the state of their program. In both the United States and Europe, accreditation has become highly institutionalized as a powerful tool in fostering and supporting the further development of public administration education and training programs. In Europe, it was created EAPAA which modeled its activities after NASPAA in US. Both organizations focused on accrediting Master's degree programs on the assumption that for Europe and the US that is the principle degree for the preparation of government administrators.

The IASIA/ICAPA approach to accreditation varies from more traditional approaches in at least two other very important ways. First, it is much more developmental in nature since, in many cases, the institutions with which ICAPA intends to work with in Africa, Asia and Latin America are ones that are themselves involved in transition. Consequently, the IASIA/ICAPA approach to accreditation puts a great deal more emphasis upon assisting institutions to more fully develop their own capacity, and not in the assessing of the current state of their development.

In summary, based on my personal experience and professional background, I could argue that the Standards of Excellence is an important piece of work, which has had a strong and positive influence on the training and education of today's and tomorrow's public leaders on global scale. Indeed, the Standards are still relevant today, but they were issued before the 2030 Agenda for

11 <https://iasia.iias-iiisa.org/accreditation.php>

Sustainable Development was adopted. As public institutions play a critical role in the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals, the Standards should be reviewed and upgraded to mainstream these goals and to reflect new developments in public administration. This is the main purpose of a Task Force¹², established in 2023 by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA). In this regard I consider that revising and upgrading the Standards represents a real opportunity to pay more emphasis on gender equality and equitable quality education.

Conclusions

The main conclusion that can be drawn is that women constitute half of the working-age population in the world and there is a rise in women representation in different sectors such as politics, public administration, businesses, education, science, technology, manufacturing etc., but their representation in leadership positions is far from being satisfactory. Much remains to be done to increase the number of women at strategic and decision making positions in government and public administration. All findings highlight and reinforce the main idea that women in power is linked to good governance, because when women take leadership roles in public administrations, governments are more responsive and more accountable.

The study indicates and emphasizes that there are many factors that can enable women to rise and to become true leaders. Moving forward for women depends on the presence of different supporting factors such as the context and/or policy environment in a country, but education is a great liberator and it is without any doubts a contributing factor to getting women into leadership positions. Education matters to women's leadership and it is as Nelson Mandela says "the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". Investing in women's education has been utilized as a policy tool and a development approach aimed to give women a voice and role in decision-making in local and national governments.

Finally, in the last decades there has been a complex demand for the development of capable, knowledgeable and skillfull public leaders whether this is looked at from the global, regional, national or local level stand point. Consequently, an important goal for the future is to develop professionalism in the public service, because it is critical for shaping the future of government and the public sector services it delivers.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, in a variety of activities, IASIA and UN/DPADM have been making efforts to build a better world through the building of more effective government as a consequence of promoting excellence in public administration education and training. The

¹² <https://unpan.un.org/events/un-desaiasia-review-and-upgrade-standards-excellence-public-administration-education-and>

Standards of Excellence, developed and accepted jointly by both organizations, has been an important piece of work with a strong and positive influence on the training and education of today's and tomorrow's public leaders on global scale. It was almost 15 years ago, when the time had come for the world to create and execute a set of standards designed to guide the development and delivery of high quality public administration education and training programs world-wide. In order to reflect new developments in public administration now the time has come for the world to review and upgrade the Standards of Excellence and to pay more emphasis to issues of gender equality and equitable quality education.

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