

**Paper Title:** Leadership and Gender – Dilemmas in UK Public Administration

**Paper Author:** Dr. Karen Miller

**Affiliation:** Senior Lecturer – Glasgow Caledonian University  
Associate Editor – Public Policy and Administration

**Contact Details:** Dr. Karen Miller  
Glasgow Caledonian University  
City Campus  
Cowcaddens Road  
Glasgow  
G4 0BA  
United Kingdom

Tel: 0141 3318465

Email: K.Miller@gcal.ac.uk

**Word Count:** 7337

**Key Words:** gender segregation, leadership, substantive representation, descriptive representation, gender mainstreaming, public administration

### **Abstract**

Women's participation in public administration processes depends on the level of descriptive and substantive representation of women in polity and policy processes. Descriptive representation refers to the proportional representation of women in a profession, organization and/or sector (Lovenduski, 2005). The substantive representation of women involves the representation of women's interests in decision making and policy processes based on the principle that it is only women who could represent their own interests (see Mackay, 2004; Lovenduski, 2005). This conceptual dichotomy of representation raises the argument that without sufficient levels of descriptive representation of women their substantive representation is limited. This argument is consistent with Kanter's (1977) critical mass theory. Within a public administration context the lack of the descriptive representation of women at senior or leadership echelons of the public service limits women's ability to impact upon decisions and policy processes, and consequently limits the substantive representation of women in policy. The paper explores gendered dilemmas in United Kingdom (UK) public administration by presenting secondary data which reveals the under-representation of women in leadership positions in various sectors of the public service and the existence of horizontal and vertical gender segregation. The paper argues that gender segregation and in particular the under-representation of women in leadership have implications for UK public administration in the formulation and implementation of policies.

## Introduction

The UK government over thirty years ago introduced legislation to address sex discrimination in organizational practices and remuneration. In drafting the legislation, legislators recognized that women were excluded from certain jobs and careers, and that their working conditions and pay were often inferior to those of men doing comparable work (see Equality of Women White Paper, 1974). Recent government reports such as the Women and Work Commission report (2006) and Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) (2006a) report have revealed limited progress has been made since the enactment of Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and Equal Pay Act (1970). Women in the UK today still face persistent pay inequality, and gender discrimination and segregation in organizations and professions. Thus, there remains a gap between policy and practice in addressing gender discrimination and segregation.

In the UK women represent approximately 60 percent of all public sector employment, but are disproportionately represented at lower level, lower paying and often part-time employment (89.5 percent) (Cabinet Office, 2006a). Of the 554,110 civil service posts in Whitehall women's descriptive representation is 52.3 percent (McTavish, Miller & Pyper, 2006). In the civil service women represent 62 percent of all administrative jobs and as of April 2005 women represented 34.8 percent of managerial positions (grades 6/7) (Cabinet Office, 2006a). Statistics released by the Cabinet Office (2006a) revealed that women represented 27.5 percent of the senior civil service. More recent research has in fact revealed a decline in the number of women at senior civil service level; of the 137 senior civil servants, just 31 are women (23%) (Bawden, 2007). The government's statistics as published in the civil service annual report reveal a gender gap in leadership positions – vertical gender segregation with a disproportionate representation of men at hierarchical managerial and leadership positions. A further analysis of the statistics reveal that although women have made some progress into leadership positions within the civil service, there is horizontal gender segregation with women concentrated in stereotypical feminine positions and agencies such as health and education.

The low level of descriptive representation of women and the horizontal and vertical gender segregation of women in the UK public sector creates a disadvantage for women and poses a number of dilemmas in public administration. Firstly, the lack of women in hierarchical leadership positions in the public sector negates the substantive representation of women (see Lovenduski, 2005) in public policy processes and in service delivery. Secondly, the lack of substantive representation of women in leadership positions in the public sector has implications for the UK government's attempts at public sector reform or modernization agenda and implementing a social inclusion agenda. For example, the gender equality duty (see Equality Act, 2006) is the latest regulatory framework to address gender discrimination by mainstreaming gender equality in the policy process, but is problematic in implementation given the lack of women's substantive representation. The UK public administration tradition is of a careerist civil service with meritorious promotion to senior ranks (see Page & Wright, 1999) resulting in leadership associated with seniority, i.e. hierarchical leadership. As discussed above the senior echelons or leadership of the civil service is disproportionately representative of men. Thus, the third dilemma relates to the masculine leadership of the civil service which impacts upon the career progression of women to leadership positions within the civil service (see Squires &

Wickham-Jones, 2004; Stivers, 2002) and thereby limits the substantive representation of women in policy formulation. These dilemmas are mutually reinforcing to the disadvantage of women in the UK public administration. This paper, based on a review of academic literature, governmental and non-governmental reports and government statistics will discuss the implications of these dilemmas for public administration in the UK.

### **Representation of Women in UK Public Administration**

At central government level, the government's policy making machinery, women overall constitute 52.3 percent of all permanent staff in the UK civil service, but at the most senior level (the Senior Civil Service) it was 27.5 percent in 2005 and for the next most senior grade (grades 6/7) it was 34.8 percent (Cabinet Office, 2006a). The government has recognized under-representation of women at senior or leadership levels of the civil service and has set targets for increasing the number of women in the Senior Civil Service and other senior grades. In 1999 with the publication of the Modernizing Government White Paper the government committed itself to increasing the number of women in the Senior Civil Service. In 1998 the number of women in the Senior Civil Service was 17.8 percent and a target of 35 percent was set for 2005 (Cabinet Office, 1999). The target for 2008 is 37 percent for female representation in the Senior Civil Service (Cabinet Office, 2006b). Thus, in a seven year period (1998 to 2005) the percentage increase of women into the Senior Civil Service was 9.7 percent. At the current rate of increase, reaching a target of 37 percent of female representation in the Senior Civil Service will take a further seven years and approximately 20 years to achieve a gender balance. However, recent research indicates the percentage of women at senior civil service level is decreasing (Bawden, 2007).

Even where government has the opportunity to directly appoint persons to leadership positions in public administration, i.e. through the public appointment process, the opportunity to appoint women and people of diversity is lost. In 2005, women made up 38 percent of public appointments in England and Wales and 34 percent in Scotland (EOC, 2005). The figure becomes even less for those holding leadership positions, i.e. chairs of public appointment bodies. For example in Scotland 16 percent of women held leadership positions on public appointment bodies (Scottish Executive, 2007). Although the process of public appointments is overseen by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, by the government's own admission more effort needs to be made to increase the diversity of appointments (Cabinet Office, 2004).

At local government level, where much of public service delivery takes place, women accounted for 74.4 percent (66.8 percent in Scotland) of the workforce (EOC, 2005). Women made up 17.9 percent of chief executives (12.5 percent in Scotland), 24.8 percent of first tier officers (chief officers and directors), 27.9 percent of all other officers (deputy chief officers, assistant directors, heads of service) (EOC, 2005). Thus, at local government level there is a significant gender gap and under-representation of women at leadership levels at this important service delivery level.

The administration of criminal justice and policing is also indicative of the under-representation of women in public administration. In 2006 in England and Wales women made up 10.2 percent

of High Court judges, 22.2 percent of District Judges and 27.4 percent of Deputy District Judges (Breitenbach, 2006). In Scotland in 2006 women represented 15 percent of Senators of the College of Justice, 8 percent of Temporary Judges, 20 percent of Sheriffs and 23 percent of part-time Sheriffs (Scottish Executive, 2006). Women made up just over 30 percent of all appointees to bodies sponsored by the Department for Constitutional Affairs (including bodies like Courts Boards, Law Commission, Legal Services Consultative Panel) (Breitenbach, 2006). Women constitute 44 percent of all appointees to Home Office sponsored bodies including regulatory and advisory bodies on immigration, misuse of drugs and sentencing. (Breitenbach, 2006). Approximately 10 percent of those at Association of Chief Police Officers level (i.e. Chief, Depute and Assistant Chief Constables) are women in England, Scotland and Wales with 8.8 percent of Chief Superintendents and Superintendents being women (EOC, 2006). More detailed figures for Scotland show slow increase of female recruits since the mid 1990s with a 25 percent intake at constable level being female (Centre for Public Policy and Management, 2006). In contrast, the National Health Service (NHS) has a high proportion of female employment, i.e. 78 percent (Department of Health 2002; ISD Scotland 2005; Welsh Assembly 2005). However, only 28 percent of health service chief executives are women (19 percent in Scotland) (EOC 2005).

The overview of the descriptive representation of women in public administration in the UK reveals that in some sectors such as local government and health there are relatively high proportions of female employment, but this is not manifested in the descriptive representation of women in leadership positions. In other sectors such as the criminal justice system there are low levels of female employment with very few women reaching leadership positions as well. The implication therefore is a lack of substantive representation of women at leadership and senior policy making levels. The reasons for gender segregation is varied from direct sex discrimination, social construction biases, masculine organizational cultures, organizational practices such as recruitment strategies, conflicts around work-life balance and child care, etc. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the reasons for vertical and horizontal gender segregation, but it is the intention to explore these gendered dilemmas for public administration in the UK.

### **Gender Segregation: Dilemmas in Public Administration**

There is a particular dilemma with regards to the lack of women at senior leadership levels of the public administration; the lack of inclusion of women and their interests in policy decision making and formulation. This lack of substantive representation of women therefore excludes women from those policies in particular which seek to address social exclusion (a New Labour government policy priority). It is at these leadership positions within public administration where policies such as the Equality Act (2006) and Modernizing Government (1999) are formulated. In fact, Chapter Six of the government's Modernizing Government White Paper (1999) include significant sections on improving the diversity of the public sector. Public policy is therefore problematic in formulation given the lack of substantive representation of women (and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, etc.) in government. A further dilemma is the interpretation and implementation of public policy, specifically policies associated with modernizing the public sector and with increasing the representation of women. A similar argument could be made that in sectors such as health, criminal justice, local government, etc. there are few women at

leadership positions which has implications for the implementation of such policies. It is significant that the Women and Work Commission commented on the slow spread of gender equality in Public Service Agreements (PSAs) in Whitehall departments and stressed the importance of political and administrative leadership in this area (Women and Work Commission, 2006). The slow rate of female progression to leadership positions and consequently the lack of female descriptive and substantive representation in the policy process create reinforcing dilemmas. Policies that are formulated to address inequality and social exclusion without the substantive inclusion of women in policy formulation will be problematic in achieving policy outcomes, i.e. gender equality and the descriptive and substantive representation of women in public administration.

A case in point is the Equality Act (2006) which introduces a gender equality duty (hereafter Duty) on all public sector organizations and those organizations conducting a public function (e.g. public appointment bodies). The Duty requires all public sector organizations to eliminate sex discrimination and play due regard to promotion gender equality. Specifically, public sector organizations are required to mainstream gender equality in public policy and service delivery. It is envisaged that the Duty will “generate policy-making that is sensitive to gender, services that meet the different needs of women and men, employment practices that challenge occupational segregation and remove the barriers to women reaching their potential, and procurement practice that promotes equality” (EOC, 2006). The Duty, enforceable since April 2007, necessitates public sector organizations collecting data on the gender profile of the organization in terms of employment practices and service delivery, and the extent to which this is taken into account when developing new policies. Public organizations will have to show a clear commitment to gender equality by demonstrating that staff responsible for policy are mainstreaming gender equality into policy development, planning and service delivery. Public sector employers will have to promote a gender balance at all levels in the workforce and ensure equal pay. A fundamental premise of the Duty is that public sector organizations mainstream gender equality in policy and service delivery. However, the adoption and implementation of the Duty, and the framing of gender mainstreaming in policy and service delivery is dependent on a public service that is gender segregated. This poses a dilemma in public administration for adopting and implementing gender equality policy. In other words, what are the prospects of the Duty and gender mainstreaming addressing the dilemmas as outlined above?

### **Prospects of Addressing Gender Segregation Dilemmas**

In order to discuss the prospect of the UK government’s latest equality policy initiative, the gender equality duty, in addressing gender segregation in public administration, the paper conceptualizes gender mainstreaming; discusses the policy transfer of gender mainstreaming; draws upon the European and UK experiences thus far, and in conclusion explores the UK government’s likely course of action and the implications thereof.

#### *Conceptualization*

Gender mainstreaming emerged from a feminist development administration paradigm of the 1970s (Walby, 2005a). Gender mainstreaming through policy transferral between transnational

organizations such as the United Nations and European Union, was adopted by various countries in their policy and public service delivery processes. The United Nations defines gender mainstreaming as;

“...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality” (ECOSOC, July 1997: Chapter IV).

The idea and conceptualization of gender mainstreaming gained prominence at the United Nations Beijing Conference on Women (1995) where governments committed themselves to mainstream gender equality throughout policy processes (Woodward, 2003). Gender mainstreaming as envisaged by the Conference required “[that]...governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programs so that, before decisions are taken, analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively (Schalkwyck and Woroniuk, 1998 as cited in Woodward, 2003). Gender mainstreaming was adopted by the Council of Europe with the idea that gender mainstreaming is the “...(re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by actors normally involved in policy-making” (Council of Europe, 1998:15). Gender mainstreaming was endorsed in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) as the official policy approach to gender equality (Rees, 2005) and would eventually permeate European Union member countries’ policy agendas. However, the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been adopted and implemented in the policy processes of member countries is disparate (see Verloo, 2001; Rubery, 2003; Rees, 2005; Pascall and Lewis, 2004; Woodward, 2003). This uncertainty stems from the fact that there is a lack of an evidence base and evaluative studies. According to Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir (2005) few empirical analyses of the implementation of gender mainstreaming have been undertaken. A further issue with gender mainstreaming is that the concept is vague and open to different interpretations (ibid). The principle of gender mainstreaming involves the integration of gender perspectives into policy processes to promote equality between men and women, yet it is recognized that it is women who are the undervalued and under-represented sex (Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir, 2005:521). The UK Duty incorporates this neutral conceptualization with policy and services meeting “the different needs of women and men.”

Nonetheless gender mainstreaming aims to enable governments to deliver gender sensitive policy and transform gender relations (Woodward, 2003). According to Walby (2005a:323) gender mainstreaming offers transformation which is neither the assimilation of women into men’s ways, nor the maintenance of a dualism between women and men, but rather something new with a positive form of those external to the policy arena such as feminist groups changing the stream of the policy process. Jahan (1995) argues that the transformative outcome of gender mainstreaming can either be “agenda setting” or “integration” of gender issues into the policy process. Agenda setting implies transformation and reorientation of existing policy paradigms,

changing decision-making processes, prioritizing gender equality and rethinking policy ends (Walby, 2005a:323). Integrationism introduces gender equality without challenging the existing policy paradigm, instead it is the “selling” gender mainstreaming as an effective way of achieving policy goals. This raises a debate as to what constitutes effective gender mainstreaming strategies; an agenda setting or integrationist approach. It is argued that the former constitutes a more transformative approach to achieving gender equality.

Beveridge, Nott and Stephen (2000) provide a distinction between integrationist and agenda setting/participatory approaches to gender mainstreaming. According to Beveridge et al (2000), integrationism primarily involves gender experts and specialists in an expert-bureaucratic model, while the agenda setting/participatory approach concerns more democratic processes of involving mobilized interest groups in policy formulation (ibid). The agenda setting or participatory approach to gender mainstreaming is more consistent with women substantively representing their interests in shaping the policy agenda and more transformative strategies to achieve gender equality. According to Walby (2005b) and Beveridge et al (2000) the participatory and integrationist approaches represent different ways in which gender mainstreaming is implemented. Gender mainstreaming is a process in which various actors, previously excluded from the policy formulation process, have an opportunity to engage in the policy process (Walby, 2005b). In this sense gender mainstreaming is participatory and involves a democratisation of policy (ibid). Beveridge et al (2000) argue that to accomplish gender mainstreaming there should be participatory and democratic processes of engaging women’s interests. However, according to Walby (2005b) citing the Council of Europe (1998) the definition of gender mainstreaming incorporates the notion that it is implemented “by actors normally involved in policy making” with presumably experts in the area of gender equality and mainstreaming – an integrationist approach.

The integrationist approach involves policy technocrats and bureaucrats drawing or selecting gender mainstreaming experts since policy technocrats often lack the expertise of gender mainstreaming. This approach is exemplified by the focus on tools such as gender budgeting, gender impact assessments, etc. which become a technocratic processes. The focus on tools or a technocratic conceptualization of gender mainstreaming disintegrates the participatory process. For example, policy technocrats may view the adoption of a tool as gender mainstreaming in itself, and therefore erroneously believe the tool satisfies the objectives of the policy. This represents a displacement of the goal of gender mainstreaming with policy technocrats prioritizing the means as opposed to the outcome of the policy. Furthermore the integrationist approach represents an incremental rather than transformative process of gender mainstreaming as policy technocrats “tinker” (see Veitch, 2005) with policy. The integrationist approach has an appeal for policy technocrats and bureaucrats as the incremental approach is not too demanding in terms of time, cost and expertise. The integrationist approach also has an appeal for gender mainstreaming experts as it allows gains to be made in terms of careers and monetary rewards (often as consultants to government). The participatory approach is not without its problems as well, with most of the problems centred on the substantive representation of women’s interests through interest groups with the difficulties of reaching a consensus in policy formulation, the disunity within interest groups, the assimilation of groups into the policy process with the

dilution of interests (see Outshoorn, 1991), and the capacity of interest groups to affect change (see Boneparth and Stoper, 1988; Gelb and Palley, 1979).

### *European Experience of Gender Mainstreaming*

A review of literature on the European experience of gender mainstreaming public policy reveals a mixed strategy with more of an integrationist and technocratic approach. In her paper Verloo (2001) explores gender mainstreaming in the Netherlands and its gender impact assessment instrument, the Emancipation Effect Report (EER). The goal of the instrument was to analyse the potential effects of new policy plans or programmes before it was implemented (Verloo, 2001:15). The impact assessment involved a number of steps such as assessing the status quo and the probable development with and without the new gender mainstreamed policy (see Verloo, 2001 for more of a description of each step). The EER in some ways was an incremental approach to policy formulation as it solved a technical problem because of its connectivity to existing policy instruments (ibid). Thus, there was an acceptance of the instrument by policy technocrats, it was easier to administer and in terms of cost, time and expertise it was not too demanding (ibid). It was perhaps the integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming in the Netherlands which ensured the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming in policy formulation. According to Verloo (2001:16) it was “idiot-proof” in that it did not need gender expertise to implement and could be applied in less than one day. Thus, the EER was an integrationist, technocratic approach and had a depoliticising effect on gender mainstreaming (Verloo, 2001:17).

Furthermore because of this technocratic, integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming, the EER was easily exportable to other countries (Verloo, 2001:17-18). The EER in time was transferred as a gender mainstreaming instrument to various European countries (Verloo, 2001:13) Verloo (ibid) in fact recalls the exportability of the instrument as, “I cannot recount the number of times that I have been asked to send the precise instructions for the Dutch Gender Impact Assessment, to Germany, to Italy, or Malta, or Ireland.” Gender mainstreaming in some European countries had come of age as a policy transfer from transnational organizations into national policy development as well as a policy transfer through a technocratic, integrationist approach between countries.

The EER was not without its problems and its success depended on the particular Dutch polity of political opportunities, the mobilisation of networks and strategic framing (an incremental, integrationist approach) (Verloo, 2001:21-22). The political will and opportunities which ensured the adoption of gender mainstreaming in policy formulation was the Dutch government’s traditional openness to non-governmental organizations (elements of a participatory approach) and in particular the Secretary of State’s commitment to equality policies (Verloo, 2001:22). The Secretary of State had already initiated inter-ministerial cooperation on gender equality and wanted to develop the EER (ibid). The Netherlands also had a history of strong mobilized networks within and outside government (ibid). The strategic framing of the EER was constructed from existent theoretical frameworks and methodologies (e.g. mainstreaming environmental issues into policy) and therefore made it easier for policy technocrats to mainstream gender (ibid). The Netherlands experience, the more successful implementation of

gender mainstreaming, reveals a mixed approach of including interest groups (participatory approach) but with an emphasis on technocratic integrationism. Verloo (2001:17-18; 23) however concludes that gender mainstreaming will “get trapped” into a technocratic framework and that evaluation of gender mainstreaming instruments needs to be conducted on a regular basis.

Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir (2005) in their analysis of gender mainstreaming in Europe reach similar conclusions as Walby (2005a; 2005b) and Verloo (2001), i.e. there has been a diverse approach to gender mainstreaming with more of a technocratic framework adopted for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in policy development. Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir (2005:527) argue that actors in the political and policy environment have not “claimed ownership” of gender mainstreaming in several countries in Europe and that implementation of gender mainstreaming depends more on political changes at national level than actors involved in the policy making process. The political changes and instability often lies in who is selected as the primary actor in shaping gender equality policies, the narrow remit and limited resources which constrain the opportunities for actors to influence the policy agenda (ibid). Moreover the lack of cooperation between actors (internally and externally to the policy process) hampers the implementation of gender mainstreaming (ibid). The effective networks of the Dutch experience are an element for successful implementation of gender mainstreaming. Further Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir’s (2005:527) analysis they also conclude that although there has been a commitment to gender mainstreaming through transnational policy commitments, “actions do not always match commitments.” Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir (2005:528) also demonstrate that gender mainstreaming has become a regulatory and technical issue in most European Union countries. Gender equality they conclude is perceived more as a derived objective of economic growth than a question of social justice (Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir, 2005:528-52).

Rubery (2003), as Coordinator of the European Commission’s Expert Group on Gender and Employment, similarly argues that the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Europe has had limited success. Rubery (2003) identifies a number of limitations in the implementation of gender mainstreaming; the problem of definition of gender equality, the incompatibility of European Employment Strategy (EES) with the achievement of gender equality, change and developments at the national level of European Union member states, and the continuing problems of a lack of expertise among policy makers (hence the appeal and palatability of the EER).

The observations made by scholars (see Rubery, 2003; Verloo, 2001; Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir, 2005; Pascall and Lewis, 2004; Walby 2005b; Rees, 2005 and Woodward, 2003) about the European experience reveal that the implementation of gender mainstreaming depends on a number of factors such as political will and that at best although there is commitment to gender mainstreaming there is still lack of action in achieving gender equality. The UK is perhaps a case in point where commitment to gender equality and women’s issues has been inconsistent in application and action.

## *United Kingdom Experience of Gender Mainstreaming*

New Labour's agenda prior to the 1997 general election showed a commitment to gender and other equality issues. The New Labour government promised to prioritize women's issues and place it at the centre of government's policy agenda (Beveridge, Nott and Stephen, 2000:392). This priority towards women's issues was articulated in the establishment of a Women's Unit in the Cabinet Office and a Cabinet Sub-committee on Women reporting to a Minister for Women. The Women's Unit was responsible for the development and promotion of policies on gender issues, the coordination of policy development related to gender across government, the establishment of a "new dialogue" between women and government, and for improving the representation of women at all levels of society (ibid). Moreover, the Women's Unit substantial remit included; developing a strategy on gender mainstreaming; developing targets to increase the number of women in public life; ensuring gender sensitivity in policy making; formally reviewing the Women's National Commission; and supporting the implementation of gender mainstreaming (Veitch, 2005:600).

The establishment of a Women's Unit and the appointment of a Minister for Women revealed the transnational policy transfer to the UK of gender mainstreaming, but New Labour's commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming was inconsistent. The idea of a Women's Unit and the Minister for Women were contested even within New Labour with some politicians describing the initiative as sexist. In the Netherlands the success of the EER rested on political will and opportunities, in the UK the inconsistent political commitment was evident in the poor resourcing of the Women's Unit, the manner of appointment of the Minister for Women, and after ten years of a New Labour government the lack of progress towards gender equality (see discussion below).

The gender mainstreaming strategy consisted of guidelines to civil servants and inter-ministerial policy coordination which involved dealing with a high volume of correspondence circulating Whitehall (Veitch, 2005:601). The guidelines itself were not without controversy with some departments wanting other equality issues to be included and some civil servants were concerned about the detail of the guidelines (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2004:84). The guidelines provided advice on how to monitor the impact of policy through the collection of data, consultation, assessment and action (ibid). The guidelines were vague and gender neutral with statements such as "gender impact assessment challenges the assumption that policies and service affect everyone in the same way. It puts people at the heart of policy-making and leads to better government by making gender equality issues visible in the mainstream of society" (Cabinet Office as cited in Squires and Wickham-Jones, 200) and "...the Programme of Public Service Reform by helping policy makers make sure that their policies deliver equality of opportunity to women and men" (Women and Equality Unit as cited in Veitch, 2005:603). The adoption and implementation of gender mainstreaming in policy was problematic given the ambiguity of the guidelines, the neutral conceptualization of gender mainstreaming as well as framing gender mainstreaming within the broader modernizing government agenda. Gender mainstreaming in policy and service delivery was opaque and ill-defined (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2004:89). Policy makers were therefore unclear as to what gender mainstreaming involved.

According to Veitch (2005:601) the sheer volume and eclectic nature of issues overwhelmed the Women's Unit particularly since the Unit lacked the gender expertise – none of the new recruits to the Unit had experience of gender mainstreaming. Despite the Unit's lack of resources there were some initial gains such as including equality issues into the first Public Service Agreements (PSAs), although this was only included at the eleventh hour and after much politicking (Veitch, 2005:601; Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2004:83). It has recently emerged that there are currently problems in the implementation of PSA's with regards to mainstreaming gender equality (see Women and Work Commission, 2006). The appointment of a Minister for Women was welcomed by feminists, but the manner of appointment was a reflection of New Labour's haphazard policy towards gender mainstreaming as Harriet Harman was appointed Minister for Women two days after she had been made Secretary for State for social security (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2004:83). Thus given the overwhelming portfolio Harman had to manage, it was no surprise that women's issues would be a policy after-thought as was her appointment (ibid). The junior minister for women, Joan Ruddock also reflected the relegation of women's issue on the policy agenda. The delay in the appointment of a junior minister, until all salaried ministerial positions had been made (legislation limits the number of paid ministers), resulted in the unsalaried appointment of a junior minister for women (perhaps not a good start for the equal pay agenda). The subsequent appointments of Ministers for Women continued New Labour's inconsistent commitment to women's issues and gender equality with Ministers (Margaret Jay, Tessa Jowell, Patricia Hewitt, Sally Morgan, Ruth Kelly, Meg Munn, etc) all having dual portfolios.

Moreover, the number of changes in Ministers for Women, the fact that the women's portfolio is not the Minister's primary duty, and the regular moving of the portfolio with the Minister invariably means that there is no long term investment of resources and civil servant commitment (Veitch, 2005:604). Nonetheless, the appointment of a Minister for Women did raise the profile of women's issues in particular the opportunity for Parliament to ask questions about gender equality and mainstreaming issues. Answers to Parliamentary Questions were drafted by the Women's Unit and the responsible department, which became a mechanism for extracting gender disaggregated data and information on the impact of policies for women from government departments (Veitch, 2005:602). Thus, an exercise in public scrutiny and accountability became the leverage for raising the consciousness of civil servants about gender equality issues. However, this was a reactive effect to public scrutiny rather than mainstreaming gender equality in policy making. According to Veitch (2005:602) "...it came at the back end of a policy –making process and subjected departments' shortcomings to public scrutiny, rather than directly influencing the development of policy. This built a reputation for the ministers as policing their colleagues rather than supporting them."

In 2001 the remit of the Women's Unit was broadened to include other equality issues and was subsequently renamed the Women and Equality Unit with the gender mainstreaming post within the Unit being abolished. The broader equality agenda resulted in inter-ministerial work taking place in a Cabinet Committee on Equality and to report as necessary to the Cabinet Committee on Domestic Affairs. However, in 2005 the remit of the Committee was changed again and it became subsumed into a Committee on Communities. Veitch (2005: 604-605) (the Women's

National Commissioner) described the UK government's commitment to gender mainstreaming and gender equality as "patchy" but hopeful of the gender equality duty to mainstream gender from central policy level to local delivery level. However, Squires and Wickham-Jones (2004:96) are less optimistic suggesting that effective gender mainstreaming requires a cultural shift in Whitehall and connectivity within and outside of government.

There is no conclusive evidence to suggest that women have benefited from the UK government's gender mainstreaming initiatives thus far. This is in part due to inconsistent political commitment, the problematic conceptualization of gender mainstreaming, policy and cultural impediments in Whitehall and the under-representation of women in policy processes. Moreover, it is doubtful given the UK experience thus far that the Duty will necessarily address gender segregation. A more likely scenario is an integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming and goal displacement with technocratic approaches to policy formulation because of the dilemmas of descriptive and substantive representation of women at leadership levels in UK public administration.

### **Conclusion**

The UK government's experiments with mainstreaming gender equality thus far have not increased the representation of women in public administration. It is doubtful that the Duty will likely achieve its policy outcome as like many of other European countries, the UK will most likely opt for integrationist approach – a continuum of the policy transfer process in Europe. As discussed above the integrationist approach will not necessarily transform the manner in which policy is formulated, rather the status quo will be maintained with policy makers drawing upon gender mainstreaming experts and tools. This does not seriously challenge the masculine culture of Whitehall, the disproportionate representation of men in leadership positions in the public sector and the dominance of men in policy making echelons. As argued earlier the lack of the descriptive and substantive representation of women will limit the effectiveness of any policy in attempting to address gender inequality. How could the dilemmas of the descriptive and substantive under-representation of women at leadership levels be addressed?

Firstly, there needs to be commitment by the political leadership to improve the representation of women in public administration and devote sufficient resources to this effort. This commitment should be embedded in the government's public sector modernization agenda. The modernization of the public sector necessitates addressing gender segregation given the large proportion of female employment in the public sector as well as having service delivery and efficiency implications. For example in the NHS, nurses (most of whom are women) constitute the largest proportion of the workforce and most are employed on a part-time basis. The preference by nurses for part-time employment in the NHS is partly due to the lack of a conducive environment for a work-life balance and flexible working (see Lane, 2004; Miller, 2006). Yet, professional and career development interests can be adversely affected by part-time working. Similarly, the NHS is adversely affected with nursing shortages, the loss of the productive capacities of nurses, high rates of part-time employment and increasing attrition in the profession. Furthermore, many nurses opt for agency employment (because of better pay and flexible working practices) and are re-employed by the NHS at a higher salary rate. In the

medical profession as well, there is evidence of female medical graduates increasingly opting for a general practice career, as opposed to a career in acute clinical specialities. This preference is partly due to the flexible and part-time working possibilities in general practice. This creates horizontal gender segregation in the NHS and in the future lead to an increase of staff shortages in acute health care. The NHS is indicative of inefficiencies within the public sector which could be addressed if women's interests were substantively represented in public policy and public sector practices.

Secondly, given the lack of gender equality expertise in the policy making echelons of government, there needs to be more of a transformative strategy to gender mainstreaming. As the Dutch experience has proved there was a mixed approach to gender mainstreaming given the particular polity context enabling the successful engagement of women's interests and their substantive representation in policy, albeit an emphasis on a technocratic integrationist framework. The extent to which a participatory approach could be achieved in the UK context requires further research. Attention will need to be paid to the UK's polity nuances such as devolution. For example, in Scotland a consultative process is part of the legislative and policy process (see Scotland Act, 1998) while in the Westminster/Whitehall system consultation with interest groups is sometimes ad-hoc and as a recent judicial decision on the UK government's policy of nuclear energy revealed, there was an inadequate consultative process. Thus, perhaps in the UK a more effective approach to gender mainstreaming is a combination of agenda setting and integrationist approaches rather than dichotomous strategies. In other words by drawing upon the collective expertise of women's interest groups and gender equality experts the substantive representation of women in policy could be achieved.

Thirdly, the UK government needs to examine intra-organizational practices given the proportion of women employed within the public sector. As part of the modernization agenda the UK government needs to manage talent in order to improve the descriptive and substantive representation of women at leadership levels. The UK government has introduced programmes such as fast track career development and Elevator Partnerships (mentoring programme), but this has had limited success in advancing the representation of women at leadership levels in the civil service. It is suggested that research to evaluate career development programmes and organizational practices needs to be undertaken to identify the career barriers to women reaching leadership positions in UK public administration.

## References

- Bawden, A. (2007) "Where are the female leaders of the future?", *Public*, March, pp.20-21.
- Beveridge, F., Nott, S. and Stephen, K (2000) "Mainstreaming and the engendering of policy-making: a means to an end?", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 7 (3), pp. 385-405.
- Boneparth, E. and Stoper, E. (1998) *Women, Power and Policy: Towards the Year 2000*, 2nd ed., New York: Pergamon Press.
- Brietenbach, E. (2006) *Gender Statistics: an evaluation. Equal Opportunities Commission Working Paper Series No. 51*, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.
- Cabinet Office (1999) *Modernizing Government White Paper*, Cm 4310, London: HMSO.
- Cabinet Office (2004) *Report of Cabinet Office Short Life Working Group on Improving Diversity in Public Appointments*, London: HMSO.
- Cabinet Office (2006a) *Civil Service Statistics 2005 Annual Report*, available at <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/management/statistics/reports/2005/index.asp> [accessed November 2006].
- Cabinet Office (2006b) *Civil Service Equality and Diversity in Employment*, available at <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/diversity/> [accessed March 200].
- Council of Europe (1998) *Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, EG-S-MS (98) 2.
- Centre for Public Policy and Management (2006) *Gender Balance in Management: Scotland's Public and Private Sectors*, Research Report prepared for the Scottish Executive by the Centre for Public Policy and Management, Glasgow: Glasgow Caledonian University.
- Department of Health (2002) *NHS Hospital and Community Health Services: Total employment by sex at 30 September 2002*, available at [http://www.performance.doh.gov.uk/HPSSS/TBL\\_D3.HTM](http://www.performance.doh.gov.uk/HPSSS/TBL_D3.HTM) [accessed November 2005].
- ECOSOC (1997) "Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system." A/52/3, 18 September 1997.
- Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) (2005) *Sex and Power: who runs Britain?* EOC: Manchester.
- Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) (2006a) 'Who runs Britain?', Manchester: EOC
- Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) (2006b) "Gender Equality Duty Draft Code of Practice Great Britain", EOC: Manchester.
- Equal Pay Act (1970) London: HMSO
- Equality Act (2006) London: HMSO.
- Equality of Women White Paper (1974) London: HMSO
- Gelb, J. and Palley, M.L. (1979) "Women and interest group politics: a comparative analysis of federal decision making", *Journal of Politics*, 41, pp. 362-392.
- ISD Scotland (2005) *NHS Scotland Workforce Statistics*, Edinburgh.
- Jahan, R. (1995) *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development*, London: Zed Books.
- Kanter, R. (1977) *Men and Women of the Corporation*, New York: Basic Books.
- Lane, N. (2004) "Women and Part-time Work: The Careers of Part-Time NHS Nurses," *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 15, pp. 259-272.
- Lovenduski, J. (2005) *Feminizing Politics*, Cambridge: Policy Press.

- Mackay, F. (2004) "Gender and Political Representation in the UK: The State of the 'Discipline'", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 6 (1), pp. 99-120.
- McTavish, D., Miller, K. and Pyper, R. (2006) "Gender and public management: education and health sectors" in D. McTavish and K. Miller (eds.) *Women in Leadership and Management*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Mosesdottir, L. and Erlingsdottir, R.G. (2005) "Spreading the Word Across Europe", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7 (December), pp. 513-531.
- Outshoorn, J. 1991. "Is this what we wanted? Positive Action as issue perversion", in E. Meehan and S. Svenhuijsen (eds.) (1991) *Equality Politics and Gender*, London: Sage.
- Page, E. and Wright, V. (eds.) (1999) *Bureaucratic Elites in Western European States: A Comparative Analysis of Top Officials*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pascal, G. and Lewis, J. (2004) "Emerging Gender Regimes and Policies for Gender Equality in a Wider Europe", *Social Politics*, 33 (3), pp.373-394.
- Rees, T. (2005) "Reflections on the Uneven Development of Gender Mainstreaming in Europe", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7 (December), pp. 555-574.
- Rubery, J. (2003) "Gender Mainstreaming and the open method of coordination: is the open method too open for gender equality policy?" Paper presented at the conference New Approaches to Governance in EU Social and Employment Policy: Open Coordination and the Future of Social Europe, European Union Centre, University of Madison, October.
- Scotland Act (1998) London: HMSO.
- Scottish Executive (2006) High Level Summary of Equality Statistics: Data Extracts by Gender, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Scottish Executive (2007) *Public Bodies and Public Appointments*, available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/government/public-bodies/public-appointments> [accessed March 2007].
- Sex Discrimination Act (1975) London: HMSO
- Squires, J. and Wickham-Jones, M. (2004) "New Labour, Gender Mainstreaming and the Women and Equality Unit", *BJPIR*, 6, pp. 81-98.
- Stivers, C. (2002) *Gender Images in Public Administration*, London: Sage
- Veitch, J. (2005) "Looking at Gender Mainstreaming in the UK Government", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7 (December), pp. 600-606.
- Verloo, M. (2001) *Another Velvet Revolution? Gender Mainstreaming and the Politics of Implementation*, IWM Working Paper, No. 5/2001, Vienna: IWM Publications.
- Walby, S. (2005a) "Gender Mainstreaming: Productive Tensions in Theory and Practice", *Social Politics*, Fall 2005, pp. 321-343.
- Walby, S. (2005b) "Introduction: Comparative Gender Mainstreaming in a Global Era", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7 (December), pp. 453-470.
- Welsh Assembly (2005) Health Statistics Wales 2005, available at <http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales/content/publication/health/2004/hsw2005/hsw2005-ch14/hsw2005-ch14.htm> [accessed November 2005].
- Women and Work Commission (2006) *Shaping a Fairer Future*, London
- Woodward, A. (2003) "European Gender Mainstreaming: Promises and Pitfalls of Transformative Policy", *The Review of Policy Research*, 20 (1), pp. 65-88.